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## MATATMA GANDHI AT WORK



*Edited by C. F. Andrews*

## MAHATMA GANDHI'S IDEAS

INCLUDING SELECTIONS FROM HIS WRITINGS

*Demy 8vo. Frontispiece. Second Impression*

"It should be studied by all who would try to understand the subtle beauty of the Hindu mind." *Spectator*

"It throws valuable light on the career of a remarkable personality."—*New Statesman*

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## MAHATMA GANDHI: HIS OWN STORY

*Demy 8vo. With illustrations. Second Impression*

"A self-revelation without a parallel, the record of a personality and a struggle possible only in our age and amid the conditions created by British rule in India. . . . An absorbing book to read. It stands alone in frankness and plain honesty. It reveals a being of profound humanity and of irresistible charm. Its place among the classics of autobiography cannot be in doubt."—*New Statesman*

# MAHATMA GANDHI

## AT WORK

HIS OWN STORY CONTINUED

EDITED BY

C. F. ANDREWS

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DEDICATED  
TO THE MEMORY  
OF  
MAGANLAL K. GANDHI



## P R E F A C E

I N T H I S B O O K, which forms the third volume of the series, I have tried to fulfil the promise which I gave in *Mahatma Gandhi: His Own Story*, by relating in his own words the epic struggle in the Transvaal to set right the wrongs which had been done to the Indian Community. There he first proved to the world the practical success of his own original method, called Satyagraha, or Truth Force, whereby the evils of the world may be righted without recourse to the false arbitrament of war. I have also added chapters which complete the picture of his dietetic and fasting experiments, together with certain personal idiosyncrasies that go to make up his complex character. The material for this story is taken from his two books *Satyagraha in South Africa* and *My Experiments with Truth*. A chapter has also been added from *Hind Swaraj*.

"I had long entertained the desire," he declares, "to write a history of that South African struggle. Some things about it I alone could relate. Only the general who conducts the campaign can know the objective of each particular move; and as this was the first attempt to apply the principle of Satyagraha to politics on a large scale, it is necessary that the public should have some idea of its development."

"The beauty," he adds, "of this method is that it comes up to oneself; one has not to go out in search for it. A struggle of Righteousness,<sup>1</sup> in which there are no secrets to be guarded, no scope for cunning, and no

<sup>1</sup> He uses the Sanskrit word "Dharma-yudda."

place for untruth, comes unsought; and a man of religion is ever ready for it. A struggle which has to be previously planned is not a righteous struggle. In the latter God Himself plans the campaign and conducts battles. It can be waged only in the name of God. Only when the combatant feels quite helpless—only when he has come to the extreme point of weakness and finds utter darkness all around him, only then God comes to the rescue. God helps, when a man feels himself humbler than the very dust under his feet. Only to the weak and helpless is the divine succour vouchsafed."

This vital principle of moral resistance, or soul force, taking the place of armed revolt, represents in my opinion by far the greatest contribution which Mahatma Gandhi has made to the moral philosophy of our own time. As the passage quoted shows, the movement depends entirely upon God for its accomplishment. It is a religious struggle from first to last; Gandhi is a man of religion, and he cannot think of such a warfare being carried on to success in any other terms. But with this one proviso he believes that what he calls his "experiment with 'Truth'" must succeed wherever this method is sincerely and simply tried. For God is Truth and Goodness.

Here then might be found just that "moral equivalent for war" which the American philosopher William James required. Mahatma Gandhi has shown us by practical experiment how the principle works. For the thoughtful Christian it has a remarkable likeness to the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount. Mr. Gandhi has never failed to acknowledge his debt of gratitude in his own religious life for that sublime teaching. The same principle is deeply embedded as an idea in the ancient

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literature of India, going back to Buddhist times and beyond. To the West in its efforts to recover from the disastrous effects of a war, wherein every decency of human life was violated and Truth was trampled in the dust, it offers a way of peace.

At the back of the Disarmament Conference and the Assemblies of the League of Nations there must be some direct method left for suffering mankind to resist intolerable evil. In the past this has nearly always taken the crude form of armed resistance and violent retaliation. Only in the rarest instances, such as the early Christians of the first century, have men sought corporately to overcome evil by the resistance of moral refusal. Powerful as this method has always proved, it has died away again. George Fox has been the latest genius in the West to restore it in an organized manner, and the Society of Friends has nobly carried on his high tradition. In the East, Mohandas Gandhi has revived it in our own times with a wealth of experiment that has made his work take almost the form of the laboratory method of modern science. He has tested every side of it in order to probe its weakness. He has confessed to "Himalayan blunders" in its working. But he has gone steadily forward with the experiment, because he supremely believes the principle itself to be sound. In all kinds of untoward circumstances and impossible conditions, he has met with either partial or complete success. In any other field of scientific investigation even such modified success as he has achieved would have set other investigators at work to carry the principle further and test all its weakest points. Yet this still remains to be done.

There is no reason whatever, as Mr. Gandhi has



shown again and again, why the same principle which he has established in the East should not prove practicable in the West. But it is a force which requires discipline, training and direction. There must be also a religious background combined with a faith that can remove mountains. For the discipline, proceeding from within, implies a sustained courage superior to military fortitude, a bravery more reckless in heroic daring than a forlorn hope in a desperate campaign, a power of suffering greater even than that of the battlefield and the trenches. Mahatma Gandhi believes this force of moral resistance in its purity to be irresistible. For it is a Law of God's Moral Nature, an attribute of God Himself. This is Gandhi's great theory of life which he has tried to bring into line with practical science by repeated experiment.

The epic story contained in this book will go far to confirm Mahatma Gandhi's own belief. We can see here before our eyes, in its dramatic setting, an insignificant body of persecuted and despised men and women transformed into a conquering army. We are not spared any of their weaknesses, though the characters are drawn by the hand of one who loves them. With their loyal support, weak and feeble as they are, Gandhi is able to win in the end a victory for the Truth without a single violent act of retaliation being committed.

I have included, as a kind of interlude at different stages, some of the more intimately personal sections of the autobiography which had been omitted from the previous volume. It would have been a great pleasure to me to have added more of such passages, but the story of the actual struggle, dramatically told, is so simple

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that it carries its own inner meaning along with it and the reader almost unconsciously feels the greatness of the issues.

In retracing over again this Transvaal episode for the purpose of editing this book, I had the singular advantage of having been personally present nearly twenty years ago at Durban, Pretoria and Cape Town during some of the most critical events whereby a settlement was reached with General Smuts. It was equally opportune that I should happen to be in South Africa itself, while this volume was being prepared, seeking to the uttermost of my power to prevent new Transvaal legislation from being passed which would have undone by an Act of Parliament much of Mr. Gandhi's laboriously accomplished work. In this connexion, I was able to visit afresh the very place in the centre of Johannesburg where he had his lawyer's office, and also Von Brandis Square where his life was nearly lost at the hands of a Pathan. It was possible for me also to go out to Tolstoy Farm at Lawley, and to see everything there almost unchanged, outwardly, from the time when the passive resisters made it their headquarters. On different occasions I passed outside the jail at Pretoria where he was imprisoned and saw the last resting-place of young Shaporji Sorabji. Along with Valliamma, he was among the noblest of the younger generation of passive resisters, who were ready at all times to lay down their lives for the Truth. For Valliamma's memory in the Transvaal there is still needed some suitable memorial, and my earnest hope is that this will not be forgotten.

Of those who took part in the struggle and are still living, S. B. Medh and Pragjee Desai have been my

daily companions in South Africa; Hermann Kallenbach was with me in Johannesburg; Henry and Millie Polak have helped me on my return to London. Others, such as Thambi Naidu and Sonya Schlesin, have been with me from time to time, reviving happy memories of strenuous days in the past. Albert Christopher is now a barrister and a leader of the Indian community in Natal. Haji Habib, who is still living, told me with much detail about his visit to London described in this book.

My deep gratitude is due to Mrs. Gool in Cape Town, whose motherly help made it possible for me to carry through the greater part of this task. In London I received the same care and help from Mrs. Alexander Whyte, and to her the same debt of gratitude is also due. I would wish to add the names of J. S. and Maud Aiman, Horace and Olive Alexander, Agatha Harrison, John Hoyland, along with others too numerous to mention, who have helped me by their sympathy and loving kindness.

To Valji Desai, Indulal Yajnik and S. Ganesan are due my sincerest thanks. It was owing in no little measure to their perseverance that Mahatma Gandhi was able to carry through successfully his original plan of writing and publishing this history. Valjibhai was solely responsible for the translation of the dictated Gujarati narrative into English, and S. Ganesan has published it in its completed form. This translation I have used quite freely, condensing and abbreviating wherever it seemed necessary to do so. In rare instances I have repeated a few lines of the text which had been already used in one or other of the two previous volumes; but this has been

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done as sparingly as possible. All that I have thus undertaken has had the full consent of Mahatma Gandhi himself, though it has not received his revision. He has been ready to trust without hesitation my judgment concerning the needs of the English-speaking public in these matters. Dr. Doke has most kindly permitted me to make extracts from his father's book, entitled, *An Indian Patriot in South Africa*, and also from the *Life* of his father, written by W. E. Cursons and published by the Christian Literature Depot, Johannesburg.

The present volume brings to an end at last that work of interpretation of the East to the West which I had contemplated many years ago through the character and work of Mahatma Gandhi. It has been a great happiness to me that the response has been so spontaneous, not only in England and America, but also on the continent of Europe. If health permits, it is still my hope in a further volume to trace out in perspective the historical background of Rabindranath Tagore. These two outstanding personalities—Tagore and Gandhi—are the living examples in our own generation whereby the West may test its capacity to understand the East.

C. F. ANDREWS

CAMBRIDGE



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## A SHORT LIST OF COMMON INDIAN WORDS

### TITLES OF REVERENCE AND RESPECT

<i>Word</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
Mahatma . . .	A title of Gandhi meaning "Great Soul"
Gurudeva . . .	A title of Tagore meaning "Revered Teacher"
Deshbandhu . . .	A title of the late C. R. Das meaning "Friend of the Country"
Lokamanya . . .	A title of the late B. G. Tilak meaning "Beloved by the people"

### RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

Sabarmati Ashram . . .	The religious institution of Mahatma Gandhi near Ahmedabad
Santiniketan . . .	The religious institution of Rabindranath Tagore near Calcutta
Gurukula . . .	The religious institution founded by Mahatma Munshi Ram near Hardwar

### TERMS USED IN PASSIVE RESISTANCE

Ahimsa . . .	Non-violence
Satya . . .	Truth
Satyagraha . . .	Truth-force or Soul-force
Satyagrahi . . .	One who practises Soul-force
Brahmacharya . . .	The practice of Chastity
Brahmachari . . .	One who practises Chastity

### MAHATMA GANDHI'S HAND-SPINNING MOVEMENT

Charka . . .	The spinning-wheel
Khaddar . . .	} Home-spun cloth
Khadi . . .	

### MUHAMMADAN RELIGIOUS TERMS

Islam . . .	The religion of the Prophet Muhammad
Muslim . . .	Belonging to Islam
Musalman . . .	Follower of Islam
Khilafat . . .	The office of Caliph
Maulvi . . .	Religious Teacher of Islam
Imam . . .	The leader of the prayers

# MAHATMA GANDHI AT WORK

## SACRED SANSKRIT BOOKS

Vedas . . . .	'The earliest religious hymns of India
Upanishad . . . .	'The earliest religious philosophy
Puranas . . . .	The sacred Hindu Legends
Gita . . . .	The Song of the Divine Lord : a most famous Scripture

## HINDU RELIGION

Dharma . . . .	Religion or religious duty
Varnashrama Dharma . . . .	Religion of Caste
Sanatana Dharma . . . .	Orthodox Hindu religion
Sanatani . . . .	An orthodox Hindu

## THE FOUR CASTES

Brahman . . . .	The first Caste (knowledge)
Kshatriya . . . .	The second Caste (rule)
Vaishya . . . .	The third Caste (trade, agriculture)
Shudra . . . .	The fourth Caste (labour)

## THE FOUR RELIGIOUS STAGES

Brahmacharya . . . .	The first stage of the religious life (chastity)
Grihastha . . . .	The second stage of the religious life (householder)
Vanaprastha . . . .	The third stage of the religious life (gradual retirement)
Sannyas . . . .	The fourth stage of the religious life (complete retirement)

## THE TWO GREAT EPICS

Mahabharata . . . .	The National Epic wherein Krishna is the Divine Hero. The Bhagavad Gita is part of this Epic
Ramayana . . . .	The Sacred Epic of North India wherein Rama is the Divine Hero. Tulasidas composed the Hindi form of the original Sanskrit poem

## POLITICAL TERMS

Swadeshi . . . .	Belonging to, or made in, one's own country
Swaraj . . . .	Self-government
Hind Swaraj . . . .	Indian Self-government

# INDIAN WORDS

## INDIAN COINAGE

Anna . . . .	Very slightly more than one penny	} 16 annas = 1 rupee
Rupee . . . .	About one shilling and sixpence	
Lakh . . . .	About seven thousand five hundred pounds sterling	
Crore . . . .	About seven hundred and fifty thousand pounds sterling	

[NOTE.—The short “a” in Indian languages is frequently pronounced like short “u” in English. For example, Satya is pronounced like Sutyā.]



# MAHATMA GANDHI AT WORK

## CHAPTER I

### THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCENE

MY INTENTION IN this book is to tell the story of the Indian struggle in the Transvaal which we ourselves called Satyagraha, or Truth Force—from two Sanskrit words meaning insistence upon Truth. In order to understand what happened, it is necessary to know something about the conditions of life in South Africa and the reasons which led to the settlement of Europeans and Indians in that country. Only a few of the most striking features will be given.

The climate of South Africa is for the most part so healthy and temperate that Europeans can settle there in comfort, while it is nearly impossible for them to reside permanently in India. Even in the warmer parts of South Africa there are lands of great elevation, with important centres of population, where the weather is dry and cold. One of these is Johannesburg, the great mining centre of the Transvaal. Only fifty years ago its site was desolate and covered over with dry grass. But when gold-mines were discovered, houses began to spring up, as if by magic, and to-day there are large substantial buildings everywhere and a great population. The wealthy people of the place have planted many trees which they have obtained from the more fertile tracts of South Africa and from Europe, paying as much as

a guinea for a single sapling. This has added to the pleasant character of the surroundings.

The capital of the Transvaal is Pretoria, at a distance of about thirty-six miles from Johannesburg. Pretoria is a comparatively quiet place, while Johannesburg is full of noise and bustle.

Natal is the province on the south-east coast with its fine seaport of Durban and its capital at Maritzburg. The land rises from the Indian Ocean to the high Drakensburg mountain range, which stretches over into the Transvaal.

Travelling farther inland towards the south, we come to the Orange Free State. Its capital is Bloemfontein, a very quiet and small town. There are no mines in this State like those in the Transvaal.

A few hours' journey from Bloemfontein takes us to the boundary of the Cape Province, which covers the whole of the south. Kimberley is its diamond city. Its capital is Cape Town, situated on the beautiful Cape Peninsula. This is the largest seaport in South Africa.

Besides these four provinces, there are several territories under British "protection," inhabited by races which had migrated there before the appearance of Europeans in those areas.

In Natal, oranges and apricots grow in such abundance that thousands of poor people get them in the country for the mere labour of picking them. The Cape Province is the land of grapes and peaches. Hardly any other country in the world grows such fine grapes. During the season they can be had so cheap that even the poorest child can get plenty of them. The Indian settlers planted mango trees in South Africa and consequently mangoes

are available. Some varieties of these can certainly compete with the best mangoes of Bombay. Vegetables also are extensively grown in Natal. It may be said that almost all the different vegetables of India are now cultivated by Indians in the Natal Province.

South Africa cannot boast of such mighty rivers as the Ganges or the Indus. The few that are there are neither large nor deep. Furthermore, the water of these rivers cannot reach many places. No canals can be taken up to the highlands; and where large rivers are absent canal irrigation becomes impossible. Wherever there is a deficiency of surface water in South Africa artesian wells are sunk, and the water needed for irrigation of fields is pumped up by windmills and steam-engines. Agriculture receives much encouragement from the Government. As South Africa lies to the south of the Equator, and India to the north, the annual climatic conditions are reversed. For example, while we have summer in India, South Africa is passing through winter.

Among the Bantu races of South Africa, the most handsome are the Zulus. I have deliberately used the word "handsome." A fair complexion and a pointed nose represent our Indian idea of beauty. But if we discard this superstition for the moment, we feel that the Creator did not spare Himself in fashioning the Zulu to perfection. Men and women among them are tall and broad-chested in proportion to their height. Their muscles are strong and well set. Their legs and arms are always well shaped. You will scarcely find a man or woman walking with a stoop. The lips are certainly large and thick, but they are in perfect symmetry with the entire physique, and I for one would not say



that they are unsightly. Their eyes are round and bright. The nose is flat and large, such as would become a broad face, and the curled hair on the head sets off to advantage the Zulu's skin, which is black and shining like ebony.

If we asked a Zulu to which of the various races he would award the palm for beauty, he would unhesitatingly decide in favour of his own people; and in this I for one would not see any want of judgment on his part. For the physique of the Zulu, as I have shown, is magnificent. It is a natural law that the skins of those races which have lived in the past near the Equator should be dark. And if we believe that there must be beauty in everything fashioned by God, we not only avoid all narrow and one-sided conceptions of beauty, but we in India would become free from any improper sense of shame and dislike which we might feel for our own complexions if they are anything but fair.

The Bantus live in round huts built of wattle and daub. These huts have a single round wall and are thatched with hay. A pillar inside supports the roof. A low entrance is the only opening for the passage of air. The Bantus plaster the wall and the floor with animal dung. It is said that they cannot make anything square in shape. They have trained their eyes to see and make round things only. We never find Nature drawing straight lines, and these innocent children of Nature derive all their knowledge from their own experience. The furniture of the hut is in keeping with the simplicity of the people. There is no room for tables, chairs, boxes, and these things are rarely found in a Bantu hut.

Before the advent of European civilization, the Bantus

used to wear animal skins, which also served them for other purposes. Nowadays they use blankets. Before the British rule, men as well as women moved about almost in a state of nudity. Even now many do the same in the country. But let not anyone infer from this that these people cannot control their senses. Where a large society follows a particular custom, it is quite possible that the custom is quite harmless even if it seems highly improper to the members of another society. These primitive people have no time to be staring at one another.

The law requires Zulu women to cover themselves from the chest to the knees when they go into town. They are thus obliged to wrap a piece of cloth round their body. Consequently cotton pieces of that size command a large sale in South Africa, and thousands of blankets and sheets are imported from Europe every year. The men are similarly required to cover themselves from the waist to the knees. Many, therefore, have taken to the practice of wearing second-hand clothing from Europe. Others wear a sort of knickers with a fastening of tape. All these clothes are imported from Europe.

The staple food of the Zulus is maize, but they take meat also when available. Fortunately they know nothing about spices or condiments. If they find hot spices in their food they dislike them. Those among them who are looked upon as quite uncivilized will not so much as touch food with spices. It is no uncommon thing for a Zulu to take, at a time, one pound of boiled maize with a little salt. He is quite content to live upon porridge made from crushed mealies, boiled in water. Whenever he can get meat, he eats it, raw or cooked, boiled or

roasted, with salt only. He will not mind taking the flesh of any animal.

The Bantu languages are named after the various tribes. The art of writing was recently introduced by Europeans. There is nothing like a special Bantu alphabet, but the Bible and other books have now been printed in Roman characters. The Zulu language is very sweet. Most of the words end with the sound of a broad "a"; therefore it sounds soft and pleasing to the ear. I have read in books that there is poetry in the words themselves. Judging from the few words which I have happened to pick up, I think this statement is true. To most of the places in Zululand they have given poetical names.

According to the missionaries, the Bantus had no religion when the white man came among them. But taking the word "religion" in a wide sense, they do believe in and worship a supreme Being beyond human comprehension. They also fear this Power. They are dimly conscious of the fact that the dissolution of the body does not mean utter annihilation. If we acknowledge morality as the basis of religion, the Bantus being moral may be held to be religious. They have an admirable grasp of the distinction between falsehood and truth. It is doubtful whether Europeans or Indians practise truthfulness to the same extent as they do in their primitive state. They have no temples or anything else of that kind. There are many superstitions among them as among other races.

This Zulu race, which is second to none in the world in physical strength, is so timid in mind to-day that even the sight of a European child brings fear. If someone aims a revolver, they will either flee or else will be too

stupefied to have the power even of flight. There is certainly a reason for this. They had never seen a rifle before and had never fired a gun. This was magic to them. Nothing more had to be done beyond moving a finger, and yet a small tube all at once emits a sound, a flash is seen, and a bullet causes death in an instant. This was something the Bantu could not understand. So he stands in mortal terror of those who wield such a weapon. He and his forefathers before him have seen how such bullets have taken the lives of many helpless and innocent people. Many even to-day do not know how this happens.

"Civilization" is gradually making headway among them. Pious missionaries deliver the message of Christ, as they have understood it. They open schools for them, and teach them how to read and write. But many, who in their primitive state were free from vices, have now become corrupt. Hardly any Bantu who has come in contact with "civilization" has escaped the evil of drink. When his powerful physique is under the influence of liquor, he becomes quite insane and commits all manner of crimes. That "civilization" must lead to a multiplication of wants is as certain as that two and two make four. In order to increase the Zulu's wants, or to teach him the value of labour, a poll-tax and a hut-tax have been imposed upon him. If these were not levied, this race, attached to the soil, would not enter mines, hundreds of feet deep, in order to extract gold or diamonds; and if their labour were not available for the mines, then gold and diamonds would remain in the depths of the earth. Likewise, the Europeans would find it difficult to get any servants. The result has been that thousands

of Bantu miners now suffer from "miners' phthisis" in order that gold may be obtained. This is a fatal disease. Those who fall into its clutches rarely recover.

One can easily imagine how difficult moral restraint becomes when thousands of men are living in mines away from their families. They consequently fall easy victims to venereal disease. Thoughtful Europeans of South Africa are alive to this very serious question. Some of them definitely hold that civilization has failed to exercise a wholesome influence upon them. As for the evil effects, he who runs may read.

About four hundred years ago the Dutch founded a settlement in South Africa which was then inhabited by such a simple and unsophisticated dark race as I have described. The Dutch kept slaves. Some of the Dutchmen from Java, with their Malay slaves, entered that part of the country which we now call the Cape Province. These Malays are Musalmans. They have Dutch blood in their veins and inherit some of the qualities of the Dutch. They are found scattered throughout South Africa, but Cape Town is their stronghold. Some of them to-day are in the service of Europeans, while others follow their own pursuits. Malay women are very industrious and intelligent. They are generally cleanly in their ways of living. In laundry work and sewing they are experts. The men carry on some petty trade. Many drive horses and carriages. Some have received higher English education. One of them is the well-known Doctor Abdurrahman of Cape Town, who was a member of the old Colonial Legislature; but under the new constitution the right of any coloured person becoming a member of the Union Parliament has been denied.

The Dutch have been as skilful cultivators as they have been brave soldiers. They saw that the country around them was admirably suited for agriculture. They also saw that the natives easily maintained themselves by working for only a short time during the year. Why should they not force these people to labour for them? The Dutch had guns and knew the methods of warfare. They also knew how to tame human beings like other animals, and they believed that their Christian religion did not object to this. They therefore commenced agriculture with the slave labour of the Hottentot and Bantu people without having a doubt as to the morality of their action.

As the Dutch were in search of good land for their own expansion, so were the English, who had also gradually arrived on the scene. The English and the Dutch were cousins. Their characters and ambitions were the same. Pots from the same pottery are often likely to clash against one another. So these two nations, while gradually advancing their respective claims, came into collision. There were disputes, and then battles between them.

When the first collision occurred many of the Dutch were unwilling to remain even under the nominal authority of the British, and therefore "trekked" into the unknown interior of South Africa. This was the origin of the settlement of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. At a later date the English suffered a defeat at Majuba Hill. Majuba left a soreness which came to a head in the Boer War. When General Cronje surrendered, Lord Roberts could at last cable to Queen Victoria that Majuba had been avenged.

These Dutch came to be known as Boers in South Africa. They have preserved their language by clinging to it as a child clings to its mother. They have a vivid perception of the close relation between their language and their national freedom. Therefore in spite of many attacks they have preserved their mother tongue intact. But the language has now assumed a new form suited to the genius of the Boers. As they could not keep up a very close relationship with Holland, they began to speak a dialect, derived from Dutch, and they have given this a permanent shape called Afrikaans. Their books are written in Afrikaans, their children are educated through it, and Boer members of the Union Parliament make it a point to deliver their speeches in it. Since the formation of the South African Union, Afrikaans and English have been officially treated on a footing of equality throughout the whole country, so much so that the Government Gazette and records of Parliament must be published in both languages.

The Boers are simple, frank and religious. They settle on extensive farms. We in India can hardly have any idea of the size of these farms; for in India a farm means generally an acre or two, and sometimes even less. In South Africa, a single farmer has hundreds or even thousands of acres of land. He is not anxious to put all this under cultivation at once; and if anyone argues with him he takes no notice. "Let it lie fallow," he will say. "Lands which now lie fallow will be cultivated by our children."

Every Boer is a good fighter. However the Boers might quarrel among themselves, their liberty is so dear to them that when it is in danger, all get ready and

fight as one man. They do not need elaborate drilling, because fighting with rifles is a characteristic of the whole nation. Generals Botha, Smuts, De Wet and Hertzog have been great lawyers, great farmers and also great soldiers. General Botha had one farm of nine thousand acres. He was a first-rate farmer. When he went to Europe, in connection with negotiations for peace, it was said of him that there was hardly anyone in Europe who was as good a judge of sheep as he was.

General Botha succeeded the late President Kruger. His knowledge of English was excellent; nevertheless, when he met the King of England and his Ministers he always preferred to talk in his own mother tongue, Afrikaans. Who would dare to say that this was not the proper thing to do? Why should he run the risk of committing a mistake in order to display his knowledge of English before the King? Why should he allow his train of thought to be disturbed in the search for the right English word? The British ministers might quite unintentionally employ some unfamiliar English idiom, and owing to misunderstanding he might be led into giving the wrong reply and get confused; and thus his cause would suffer. Why should he risk committing such a serious blunder as that?

Boer women are as brave and simple as the men. If the Boers shed their blood in the Boer War, they were able to offer this sacrifice owing to the wonderful courage of their women-folk and the inspiration they received from them. The women were not afraid of widowhood and refused to waste a thought upon the future.

The Boers, both men and women, are religiously-



mindcd Christians. Yet it cannot be said that they believe in the New Testament. As a matter of fact, Europe itself does not believe in it. But in Europe they do claim to respect it, although only a few observe in action Christ's own religion of peace. But the Boers know the New Testament merely by name. They read the Old Testament with devotion and know by heart the descriptions of battles which it contains. They fully accept the Old Testament doctrine of an "eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," and they act accordingly.

Boer women have always understood that their religion required them to suffer in order to preserve their independence, and therefore they patiently and cheerfully endured all hardships. Lord Kitchener left no stone unturned in order to break their spirit. He confined them in separate concentration camps, where they had to undergo indescribable sufferings. They were short of food and suffered from piercing cold as well as scorching heat. Still the brave Boer women did not flinch. At last, King Edward wrote to Lord Kitchener, saying that he could not tolerate such things any longer; if this was the only means of reducing the Boers to submission, he would prefer any sort of peace rather than the continuance of war carried on in that fashion. He asked the General to bring the war to a speedy end.

When this cry of anguish reached the English people they were very deeply pained. They were still full of admiration for the bravery of the Boers. The fact that such a small nationality should sustain a conflict with their world-wide empire was rankling in their minds. So when the cry of agony raised by the women in the concentration camps was heard, not through

themselves nor through the Boer men, who then were fighting valiantly on the battlefield, but through a few high-souled Englishmen and women, the English people began at last to relent. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman read the mind of the British nation, and raised his voice against the war. Mr. W. T. Stead publicly prayed, and invited others to pray, that God might decree even a defeat to his own countrymen in such an unjust war. This was a remarkable sight. Real suffering, bravely borne, melts even the heart of stone. Such is its spiritual power. There lies the key to the Satyagraha Movement.<sup>1</sup>

In the end, the Peace of Vereeniging was concluded, and eventually all the four colonies of South Africa were united under one Government. There are a few facts connected with this peace which are not within the knowledge of many. The Act of Union did not immediately follow the Peace of Vereeniging, but each colony had its own legislature for the time being. The ministry was not fully responsible to the legislature. The Transvaal and the Free State were governed on Crown Colony lines. General Botha and General Smuts were not the men to be satisfied with such restricted freedom. They flatly refused to have anything to do with the Transvaal Legislative Council. They non-co-operated and kept aloof altogether from the Government. Lord Milner made a pungent speech, in the course of which he said that General Botha need not have attached so much importance to himself. The country's Government could well be carried on without him. Lord Milner thus decided to stage *Hamlet* without the Prince of Denmark.

<sup>1</sup> Satyagraha means literally "Truth Force." It implies moral resistance without the use of physical force.

I have written in unstinted praise of the bravery, the love of liberty, and the self-sacrifice of the Boers. But I did not intend to convey the impression that there were not differences of opinion among them during their days of trial, or that there were not weak-kneed persons among them. Lord Milner succeeded in setting up a party among the Boers who were not difficult to satisfy, and persuaded himself into the belief that he could make a success of the Transvaal Legislature with their assistance. But even a stage play cannot be managed without a hero: and an administrator in this matter-of-fact world who expects to succeed, while ignoring all the while the central figure in the situation, can only be described as insane.

Such, indeed, was the fate of Lord Milner. It was said that though he indulged in bluff, he found it so difficult to govern the Transvaal and the Free State without the assistance of General Botha, that he was often seen in his garden in an anxious and disturbed state of mind. General Botha distinctly affirmed that by the Treaty of Vereeniging, as he understood it, the Boers were immediately entitled to complete internal autonomy. He added that if this had not been the case he would never have signed the treaty at all. Lord Kitchener declared in reply that he had given no such pledge to General Botha. The Boers would only be gradually granted full self-government as they proved their loyalty. Now, who was to judge between these two? How could one expect General Botha to agree if arbitration were suggested?

The decision arrived at in the end by the Imperial Government of those days was very creditable to them. They conceded that the stronger party should accept

the interpretation of the agreement put upon it by the weaker. According to the principles of justice and truth that is the correct canon of interpretation. For though I may have meant to say something different, nevertheless I must concede that my speech or writing conveyed the meaning ascribed to it by my hearer or reader. We often break this golden rule in our lives. Hence arise many of our disputes; and a half-truth, which is worse than untruth, is made to do duty for truth itself.

Thus when truth—in the present case, General Botha—had fully triumphed, he set to work. All the colonies were eventually united, and South Africa obtained full self-government. It is no exaggeration to say that South Africa is to-day completely independent. The British Empire cannot receive a single farthing from South Africa without its own consent. Still further, the British Ministers have conceded that if South Africa wishes to remove the Union Jack and to be independent even in name, there is nothing to prevent it from doing so. If as a matter of fact the Boers have so far not taken this step, there are strong reasons for it. For one thing, the Boer leaders are shrewd and sagacious men. They see nothing improper in maintaining within the British Empire a partnership in which they have nothing to lose. But there is another very practical reason. In Natal the British predominate; in the Cape Province the British are numerous also, though they do not there outnumber the Boers; in Johannesburg itself the British element is predominant, though the Boers are in a large majority in the rest of the Transvaal. This being the case, if the Boers were to seek to establish an independent Republic in South Africa, the result would be internecine

strife and possibly a civil war. South Africa, therefore, continues to rank as a Dominion of the British Empire.

The way in which the Constitution of the South African Union was framed is worthy of note. A National Convention, composed of delegates representative of all parties appointed by the Colonial legislatures, unanimously prepared a Draft Constitution and the British Parliament had to approve of it in its entirety. A member of the House of Commons drew the attention of the House to a grammatical error, and suggested that it should be rectified before the Draft Constitution was passed. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, while rejecting the suggestion, observed that faultless grammar was not essential to carrying on a government; that this Draft Constitution had been framed as a result of negotiations between the British Cabinet and the Ministers of South Africa, and that they did not reserve to the British Parliament even the right of correcting a grammatical error. The Constitution, therefore, recast in the form of an Imperial Bill, passed through both Houses of the British Parliament just as it was, without the slightest alteration.

There is one more circumstance worthy of notice in this connexion. There are some provisions in the Act of Union which would appear meaningless to the lay reader. They have led to a great increase in expenditure. This had not escaped the notice of the framers of the Constitution; but their object was not to attain perfection, but by compromise to arrive at an understanding and to make the Constitution a success. That is why the Union still has four capitals, no colony being prepared to part with its own capital. Similarly, although the old colonial

legislatures were abolished, Provincial Councils with subordinate and delegated functions were set up. And though Governorships were abolished, Administrators corresponding in rank to Governors were appointed for each province. Everyone knows that four legislatures, four capitals, and four Governors are unnecessary and serve merely for display. But the shrewd statesmen of South Africa did not mind this. A South African Union was desirable, and therefore the politicians did what they thought fit, regardless of outside criticism. Afterwards they got everything approved of by the British Parliament without a single addition or alteration.

## CHAPTER II

### THE EVILS OF INDENTURE

THE BRITISH HAD settled in Natal, where they obtained at first some concessions from the Zulus. They noticed that excellent sugar-cane, tea and coffee could be grown there. Thousands of labourers would be needed to produce such crops on a scale far beyond the working capacity of a handful of colonists from England. Therefore, they first offered inducements and then threats to the Zulus in order to make them work, but in vain. Slavery had already been abolished, and the Zulu is not used to hard agricultural labour. He can easily maintain himself by working six months in the year. Why, then, should he bind himself to an employer for a longer term? The English settlers could not get on at all with their plantations in the absence of a stable labour force. They therefore opened negotiations with the Government of India, which was in the complete control of Great Britain. They requested its help in order to obtain a steady supply of labour. The Government of India complied with their request. The first batch of indentured labourers from Calcutta and Madras reached Natal on November 16, 1860, truly an ominous date for India itself. For if these indentured labourers had not arrived, there would have been no Indians in South Africa and therefore no Satyagraha.

In my humble opinion, the Government of India was not well advised in taking the action it did. The British officials in India, consciously or unconsciously, were

partial to the British settlers in Natal. It is true that, wherever possible, conditions purporting to safeguard the labourers' interests were entered upon the indentures. Arrangements were also made for their lodging. But no adequate consideration was given to the method by which these illiterate labourers, who had gone out to a distant land, should seek redress if they had any grievances against the British settlers. Not a thought was given also to their religious needs, or to the preservation of their morality. The British officials in India did not realize that, although slavery had been abolished by law, the employers had not yet got rid of the desire to make slaves of their employees, and that therefore the Indian labourers, who went out under indenture to Natal, would virtually become slaves on the estates for the whole term of their indenture.

Sir W. W. Hunter, the great Indian historian, who had studied very closely indeed these indentured labour conditions, once used a remarkable phrase about them. Writing about the Indian labourers in Natal, he said that theirs was a "state of semi-slavery." On another occasion, in the course of a letter, he described their condition as "bordering on slavery." Mr. Harry Escombe, the most prominent European in Natal at the end of last century, while tendering his evidence before an Industrial Commission in Natal on indentured labour, practically admitted as much. Testimony to the same effect can readily be gathered from the statements of leading Europeans in South Africa which were incorporated in the memorials on the subject submitted to the Government of India. But the fates had to run their course; and the steamer which carried those first Indian



labourers to Natal carried with them the seed of the great Satyagraha movement.

I have not the space to relate the whole sordid story of Indian indenture in detail—how the labourers were fraudulently inveigled to come out by Indian recruiting agents connected with Natal; how under this delusion as illiterates they left the mother country; how their eyes were opened on reaching Natal; how all the restraints of religion and morality gave way at last, until the very distinction between a married woman and a concubine ceased to exist among these unfortunate people.

Many years before this, thousands of Indians, under the same indenture system, had already settled in Mauritius. When therefore the news reached Mauritius that indentured labourers were going to Natal in great numbers, some Indian traders, who had already done business with such indentured emigrants, were induced to follow these new labourers to Natal in order to trade with them. Sheth Abubakar Amod<sup>1</sup> of Mauritius, a Muhammadan Meman, first thought of opening a shop in Natal. The British in Natal had then no idea of the ability of these Gujarati Indian traders, nor did they much care about it. They had been able to raise very profitable crops of sugar-cane with the assistance of Indian labour, and in a surprisingly short time they had been able to supply South Africa with their manufactured sugar. They made so much money out of these plantations that they were able to build mansions for themselves and to turn the coastal belt of Natal from a wilderness into a garden. In such circumstances, they

<sup>1</sup> Sheth is a title of respect, meaning a banker or a large merchant. A Meman is a special class of Muhammadan traders.

naturally did not mind an honest and plucky trader like Abubakar Sheth settling in their midst. So he peacefully carried on trade and purchased land, and in due time the story of his prosperity reached Porbandar, his native place in India.<sup>1</sup> Other Memans consequently reached Natal. Borahs from Surat followed them.<sup>2</sup> These Muhammadan traders needed accountants, and Hindu accountants accompanied them. Thus two different classes of Indians settled in Natal; first of all there were the free traders and their free servants chiefly from Gujarat, and secondly there were the ex-indentured labourers who had been recruited chiefly from Madras Presidency in the early days of the indenture.

In course of time children were born to these Indian labourers under indenture. Although not bound to labour, these children were affected by several stringent provisions of the indenture law of Natal. How can the offspring of slaves altogether escape slavery? The Indian labourers had gone to Natal under no obligation to labour on the plantations after the five years' period of indenture was over. They were entitled to settle in Natal if they wished. Some elected to do so, while others returned home. Those who remained in Natal came to be known as "free Indians." They were not, however, admitted to all the privileges enjoyed by the entirely free Indians who had come out as traders. For instance, those who had been indentured, even after their release, were required to obtain a pass if they wanted to go from one

<sup>1</sup> Porbandar is a seaport in Kathiawar on the west coast of India. A group of Indian Muhammadan merchants, called Memans, live there. Mahatma Gandhi was himself born at Porbandar and his father was Prime Minister of the State.

<sup>2</sup> Surat is a town on the sea border, north of Bombay. The Borahs are another special class of Muslim traders.

place to another. If they married and desired that the marriage should be legal they were required to register it with an official known as the Protector of Indian Immigrants. They were also subject to other restrictions which distinguished them as a class by themselves.

The Indian traders saw that they could trade not only with the indentured labourers and these "free Indians," but also with the Zulus. Indeed, these Indian traders became a source of great convenience to the Zulus, who were afraid of the European traders. The European traders might desire to sell goods to the Zulus, but it would be too much for the latter to expect courtesy at European hands. They might think it a great good fortune if they were given full consideration for their money. Some of the Zulus had the bitter experience that they purchased an article worth four shillings, then placed a sovereign on the counter, and received four shillings as a balance instead of sixteen, and sometimes even nothing at all. If the Zulu asked for the balance, or showed how the amount paid him was less than his due, the reply would only be gross abuse.

On the other hand, Indian traders had usually an easy way of trading with the Zulus. The latter would like to enter the shop and handle and examine any goods they wanted to purchase without hindrance. Indian traders permitted all this, because it was in their own interest. The Indian also did not miss an opportunity of cheating his Zulu customers; but all the same his general courtesy made him popular with them. Moreover, the Zulus never had any fear of the Indian traders. On the contrary, cases occurred in which the Indian tried to cheat them and in consequence was roughly handled by the Zulus.

More often still, Zulu customers have been heard to abuse Indian traders. Thus it was the Indian who feared the Zulu, rather than the Zulu who feared the Indian. The result was that trade with the Zulus proved very profitable to Indian merchants and they came over from India in order to make wealth.

In the Transvaal and the Orange Free State there were Boer Republics during the latter half of last century. In these Boer Republics the Bantu races had no power at all. The European has remained all-powerful. Indian traders had heard that they could also trade with the Boers, who, being simple, frank and unassuming, would not think it below their dignity to deal with them. Several Indian traders, therefore, proceeded to the Transvaal and the Orange Free State and opened shops there. As there were no railways these traders earned large profits. Their expectations were generally fulfilled, and they carried on considerable trade both with the Boers and the Bantus. In the same way, several Indian traders went to Cape Colony and began to prosper there also.

Thus the Indians became gradually distributed as traders in all four colonies; but the indentured labourers, who had come over from India in large numbers owing to recruiting, were all confined to Natal. At the present time, after more than seventy years, there are about 150,000 Indians in Natal, 15,000 in the Transvaal, and 6,000 in the Cape Province. The Orange Free State has evicted all Indians, with the exception of a few hotel waiters.

The European planters, however, could not afford to have Indian labourers who, after serving their term, were

free to compete with them. No doubt the indentured Indians had gone to Natal because they had not been very successful in agriculture or other pursuits in India. Still it is not to be supposed that they had no knowledge of agriculture, or that they did not understand the value of cultivating the soil. They found that even if they grew only vegetables in Natal they could earn a good income, and that their earnings would be still better if they owned a small piece of land. Many, therefore, on the termination of their indentures began to purchase land for market gardening, and thus made a fair income, especially in the country district round Durban.

This was, on the whole, advantageous to the settlers in Natal. Various kinds of vegetables, which had never been grown before for want of a competent class of market gardeners, became now available. Other kinds, which had been grown in small quantities before, could now be had in abundance. The result was a fall in the price of vegetables.

But the European planters as a whole did not relish this new development. They began to realize that they had possible competitors in the field where they believed they had a monopoly. A movement was therefore set on foot against these ex-indentured immigrants. While, on the one hand, the Europeans demanded more and more labourers and easily took in as many of them as came over direct from India, on the other hand they started an agitation to harass the free Indians in a variety of ways in order to drive them back to India.

The movement assumed many forms. Some people demanded that the labourers who had already completed their indentures should be sent back to India at once,

and that all fresh labourers arriving in Natal should have a new clause entered in their indentures, providing for their compulsory repatriation at the end of the five years' indenture. A second set advocated the imposition of a heavy annual capitation tax on the labourers at the end of the first period of five years in order to force them back under indenture. Both parties desired one thing, to make it impossible for ex-indentured labourers to live as free men in Natal.

This European agitation attained such serious dimensions that the Government of Natal at last appointed a Commission of Enquiry. Since the presence of the ex-indentured Indian labourers was clearly beneficial to the Natal population from an economic point of view, the independent evidence recorded by the Commission was against the European agitators, who thus failed to achieve any tangible result for the time being. But just as fire, although extinguished, leaves a trail behind it, so this European movement against the Indians made its impression on the Government of Natal.

How could it be otherwise? The Government of Natal was naturally friendly to the European planters. Therefore, at last, it corresponded at length with the Government of India on the subject. But the Government of India could not all at once accept proposals which would reduce indentured labourers to perpetual slavery. One main justification for sending the Indian labourers to such a far-off land under indenture had been that the labourers, after completing their indentures, would become free to develop their powers, and consequently improve their economic status. As Natal was still a Crown Colony, the Colonial Office was fully responsible

for the control of its administration. Natal planters, therefore, could not look for help from that quarter in satisfying their unjust demands. For this and similar reasons a movement was set on foot to attain responsible government, which was eventually conferred on Natal in 1893.

Natal now began to feel her own strength. The Colonial Office no longer found it difficult to adopt whatever demands she might choose to make. Delegates from the new responsible Government of Natal came to India to confer with the Government of India. They proposed the imposition of an annual tax of twenty-five pounds, or three hundred and seventy-five rupees, on every Indian who had been freed from indenture.

No Indian labourer could pay such an exorbitant tax and live in Natal as a free man. Lord Elgin, the Governor-General of India, considered the amount excessive, but ultimately he accepted an annual poll tax of three pounds. This was equivalent to nearly six months' earnings under indenture. The tax was levied, not only on the labourer himself, but also upon his wife, together with his daughters over thirteen years and his sons over sixteen years of age. There was hardly any labourer who had not a wife and a couple of children. Thus, as a general rule, every labourer in Natal was required to pay an annual tax, averaging twelve pounds, after he had been released from indenture.

Only those who actually were obliged to undergo these hardships could fully realize their injustice and misery, and only those who witnessed the sufferings of the ex-indentured Indians could have some idea of their meaning. The Indian Community carried on a powerful agitation against this action of the Government of Natal.

Memorials were submitted to the Imperial Government and the Government of India, but to no purpose apart from the reduction in the amount of the tax which I have mentioned. What could the illiterate labourers do or understand in this matter? The agitation on their behalf was carried on by the Indian traders, actuated by motives either of patriotism or philanthropy, but they had no political training.

Free Indians fared no better. The European traders of Natal carried on a similar agitation against them for mainly the same reason. Indian traders were well established. They had acquired land in good localities. As the number of freed labourers began to increase there was a larger and larger demand for the class of goods required by them. Bags of rice were imported from India in their thousands and sold at a good profit. Naturally this trade was largely in the hands of Indians, who had besides a fair share of the trade with the Zulus. Thus they became an eyesore to the European traders on account of the profits they made.

Again, some Englishmen pointed out to the Indian traders that according to the law they were entitled to vote in the elections for the Legislative Council of Natal, and to stand as candidates for the same. Some Indians, therefore, got their names entered on the electoral roll. This made the European politicians of Natal join ranks with the anti-Indians. They doubted whether the Europeans could stand in competition with Indians if the Indian prestige increased, and if their position was consolidated.

The first step, therefore, taken by the responsible Government of Natal in relation to the free Indians was



to enact a law disfranchising all Asiatics save those who were at the time already on the voters' list. A Bill to that effect was first introduced into the Legislative Assembly of Natal in 1894. This was based on the principle of excluding Indians, as Indians, from the franchise. It was the first piece of legislation in Natal directly affecting them in which racial distinctions were made. Therefore Indians resisted this measure, a memorial was hastily prepared and four hundred signatures were appended to it. When the memorial was submitted to the Legislative Council of Natal that body was startled. But the Bill was passed all the same. A memorial bearing ten thousand Indian signatures was then submitted to Lord Ripon, who was Secretary of State for the Colonies. Ten thousand signatures meant almost the total population at the time of adult free Indians in Natal. Lord Ripon disallowed the Bill and declared that the British Empire could not agree to the establishment of a colour bar in its legislation. The reader will be in a position later on to appreciate how great was this victory for the Indian cause.

The Natal Government, therefore, brought forward another Bill removing racial distinctions, but indirectly disqualifying Indians on other grounds. A strong protest was made against this as well, but without any success. The new Bill was ambiguous in meaning. Indians were in a position to carry it finally to the Privy Council to obtain its correct interpretation; but they did not think it advisable to do so. I still think that they did the right thing in avoiding this endless litigation. It was no small thing that the Colour Bar was not allowed to be set up against them in the Bill when it became law.

But the planters and the Government of Natal were not likely to stop there. To nip the political power of the Indians in the bud was for them the indispensable first step; but the real point of their attack was Indian trade and free Indian immigration. They were uneasy at the thought of the Europeans in Natal being swamped if India with its teeming millions invaded Natal. The approximate population of Natal at the time was 400,000 Zulus and 40,000 Europeans, as against 60,000 indentured, 10,000 ex-indentured and 10,000 free Indians. The Europeans had no solid grounds for apprehension, but it is impossible to convince by arguments men who have been seized with vague terrors. As they were ignorant of the helpless condition of India and of the manners and customs of the Indian people, they were under the impression that the Indians were as adventurous and resourceful as themselves.

The result of successful opposition to the disfranchising Bill was that in two other laws passed by the Natal Legislature it was obliged to avoid racial distinction and to attain its end in an indirect manner. The position, therefore, was not as bad as it might have been. On this occasion too, Indians offered a strenuous resistance, but the laws were enacted in spite of their opposition. One of these imposed severe restrictions on Indian trade and the other on Indian Immigration in Natal. The substance of the first Act was that no one could trade without a licence issued by an official appointed in accordance with its provisions. In practice, any European could get a licence without any difficulty, while the Indian had to face every difficulty in the matter. He had to engage a lawyer and incur other expenditure.

Those who could not afford it had to go without the licence.

The chief provision of the Immigration Act was that only such immigrants as were able to pass the education test in a European language could enter the colony. This closed the doors of Natal against scores of Indians. Lest I might inadvertently do the Government of Natal an injustice, I must state that the Act further provided that an Indian resident in Natal for three years before the passing of that Act could obtain a certificate of domicile enabling him to leave the colony and return at any time with his wife and minor children without being required to pass an education test.

The indentured and free Indians in Natal were and still are subject to other disabilities, both legal and extra-legal, in addition to those already described above. But it is not necessary to tax the reader with a recital of them. Only such details will be given here as are essential to a clear understanding of the story.

As in Natal, so in the other Colonies anti-Indian prejudice had more or less begun to develop even before 1880. Except in Cape Colony, the general European opinion was that as labourers the Indians were unobjectionable, but it had become an axiom with many Europeans that the immigration of free Indians was purely a disadvantage to South Africa. The Transvaal was a Republic. For Indians to declare their British citizenship before its President was only to invite ridicule. If they had any grievance, all they could do was to bring it to the notice of the British Agent at Pretoria. But the outrageous thing was that when the Transvaal came under the British flag there was none from whom the

Indians could expect even such assistance as the Agent rendered when the Transvaal was independent.

Lord Morley was Secretary of State for India when a deputation on behalf of the Indians waited upon him. He declared in so many words that, as the members of the deputation were aware, the Imperial Government could exercise but little control over self-governing Dominions. They could not dictate to them; they could plead, they could argue, they could press for the application of their principles. Indeed, in some instances they could more effectively remonstrate with foreign Powers—as they had remonstrated with the Boer Republic—than with their own people in the Dominions. The relations between the Mother Country and the Dominions were in the nature of a silken thread which would snap with the slightest tension. Since force was out of the question, he assured the Deputation that he would do all he could by negotiation. When war had been declared on the Transvaal, Lord Lansdowne, Lord Selborne and other British statesmen declared that the scandalous treatment accorded to the Indians by the South African Republic had been one of the causes which led to the war.

Let us now see what sort of treatment this was. Indians first entered the Transvaal in 1881. The late Sheth Abubakar opened a shop in Pretoria and purchased land in one of the principal streets of the city. Other traders followed. Their great success excited the jealousy of European traders, who commenced an anti-Indian campaign in the newspapers and submitted petitions to the Boer Volksraad, or Parliament, praying that Indians should be expelled and their trade stopped.

The Europeans in this newly opened-up country had

boundless hunger for riches. They were nearly strangers to the dictates of morality. Here are some statements in their petitions: "These Indians have no sense of human decency. They suffer from loathsome diseases. They consider every woman as their prey. They believe that women have no souls." These four statements contain four lies. It would be easy to multiply such specimens. As were the Europeans, so were their representatives. Little did the Indian traders know what a sinister and unjust movement was being carried on against them. They did not read the newspapers. Yet in the end the Press campaign and the petitions had the desired effect, and a Bill was introduced against the Indians into the Volksraad. The leading Indians were taken aback when they came to know how events had shaped themselves. They went to see President Kruger, who did not so much as admit them to his house, but made them stand in the courtyard.

After hearing them for awhile, President Kruger said: "You are the descendants of Ishmael, and therefore from your very birth you are bound to slavery. As you are the descendants of Esau and Ishmael we cannot admit you to rights placing you on an equality with ourselves. You must remain content with the rights we grant you." It cannot be said that this reply from the President was inspired by any malice or anger. President Kruger had been taught from his childhood the stories of the Old Testament, and he believed them to be true. How can we blame a man who gives candid expression to his opinions, such as they are? Ignorance, however, is bound to do harm even when associated with candour, and the result was that in 1885 a very drastic law was

rushed through the Volksraad, as if thousands of Indians were on the point of flooding the Transvaal.

The British Agent was at last obliged to move in the matter. The question was finally carried to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. In terms of this Law 3 of 1885, every Indian settling in the Republic for the purpose of carrying on trade was required to register at a cost of twenty-five pounds, subject to heavy penalties. No Indian could hold an inch of land or enjoy the rights of citizenship. All this was so manifestly unjust that the Transvaal Government could not defend it in argument. There was a treaty in existence between the Boers and the British known as the London Convention, Article 14 of which secured the rights of British subjects. The British Government objected to this anti-Indian law as being in contravention of that Article. The Boers urged in reply that the British Government had previously given their consent, whether express or implied, to the law in question.

A dispute thus arose between the British and the Boer Governments, and the matter was referred to arbitration. The arbitrator's award was unsatisfactory. He tried to please both parties. The Indians were therefore the losers. The only advantage they reaped, if advantage it can be called, was that they did not lose so much money as they might otherwise have done. The Law was amended in 1886 in accordance with the arbitrator's award. The registration fee was reduced from twenty-five pounds to three pounds. The clause which completely debarred Indians from holding landed property was removed. But it was provided instead that Indians could acquire fixed property only in such locations, wards and streets

as were specially set apart for their residence by the Transvaal Government. This Government did not honestly carry out the terms of the amendment clause, and withheld from Indians the right to purchase freehold land even in the locations. In all townships where Indians had already entered these locations were selected in dirty places, situated far away from the towns, with no water supply, no lighting arrangements, and no sanitary conveniences.

Thus the Indians became the "untouchables" of the Transvaal; for it can be truly said that there is no difference between these locations and the untouchables' quarters in India. Just as the Hindus believe that the touch of the Dheds,<sup>1</sup> or residence in their neighbourhood, leads to pollution of high caste people, so did the Europeans in the Transvaal believe for all practical purposes that physical contact with the Indians would defile them.

In Christian Europe the Jews were once its "untouchables," and the quarters that were assigned to them had the offensive name of "ghettoes." The ancient Jews regarded themselves as the chosen people of God, to the exclusion of all others, with the result that their descendants were visited with a strange and even unjust retribution. Almost in a similar way the Hindus have considered themselves "Aryas" or civilized, and a section of their own kith and kin as "Anaryas" or untouchables, with the result that a strange, if unjust, nemesis is being visited not only upon the Hindus in South Africa, but also upon the Musalmans and Parsis as well, inasmuch as they belong to the same country and have the same colour as their Hindu brethren.

<sup>1</sup> A lower caste in India whose work is that of scavenging.

In South Africa we have acquired the odious name of "coolies." It has a contemptuous connotation. It means what a pariah or an untouchable means to us, and the quarters assigned to the "coolies" are known as "coolie locations." People were densely packed in these ghettos, the area of which never increased with the increase in population. Beyond arranging to clean the latrines in a haphazard way, the Municipality did nothing to provide any sanitary facilities, much less good roads or lights. It was hardly likely that it would safeguard its sanitation, when it was indifferent to the welfare of the people. The Indians living there were too ignorant of the rules of municipal hygiene to do without the supervision of the Municipality. Usually people migrate abroad in search of wealth, and the bulk of the Indians who went to South Africa were ignorant agriculturists who needed all the care and protection that could be given them in these matters. The traders and educated Indians who followed them were very few in number.

The Transvaal Government interpreted Law 3 of 1885 to mean that the Indians had only trading rights in the locations. The matter was put to arbitration. The arbitrator had decided that the interpretation of the Law rested with the ordinary tribunals of the Transvaal. The Indian traders were therefore in a very precarious position. Nevertheless, they managed somehow to maintain themselves fairly well by carrying on negotiations in one place, by having recourse to law courts in another, and by exerting what little influence they possessed to get relief in a third. Such was the miserable and almost intolerable position of the Indians in the Transvaal at the outbreak of the Boer War.



In the Orange Free State matters were carried to an even greater length of injustice and unfair treatment. Hardly a dozen Indians had opened shops there when the Europeans started a powerful agitation against them. The Volksraad passed a stringent law and expelled Indian traders from the Free State altogether, awarding them a merely nominal compensation. This law provided that no Indian could on any account hold fixed property, or carry on mercantile or farming business, or enjoy franchise rights in the Orange Free State. With special permission an Indian could reside as a labourer or as a hotel waiter. But the authorities were not obliged to grant even this precious permission in every case. The result was that a respectable Indian could not live in the Free State even for a couple of days without great difficulty. At the time of the Boer War there were no Indians in the Free State except a few hotel waiters.

In Cape Colony, too, there was some newspaper agitation against Indians, and the treatment to which they were subjected was not free from humiliating features. For example, Indian children could not attend public schools. Indian travellers could hardly secure hotel accommodation. But there were no restrictions as to trade and the purchase of land for a long time.

There were special reasons for this different attitude in Cape Colony. As we have already seen, there was a fair proportion of Malays in the Cape population. Since the Malays are Musalmans, they soon came into contact with their Indian co-religionists, and consequently with other Indians later on. How could the Government of Cape Colony legislate against the Malay? The Cape was their mother-land and Dutch was their mother

tongue. They had been living with the Dutch from the very beginning and therefore had largely imitated them in their ways of life. Cape Colony, therefore, had been the least affected by the colour prejudice.

Again, as Cape Colony was the oldest settlement and the chief centre of culture in South Africa, it produced sober, gentlemanly and large-hearted Europeans. In my opinion there is no place on earth and no people which are incapable of producing the finest types of humanity, given suitable opportunities and education. It has been my good fortune to come across such men and women in South Africa. In Cape Colony, however, the proportion was very much larger than elsewhere. Perhaps the best known and the most learned among them was Mr. J. X. Merriman, who was a member of the first and subsequent ministries that came into power after the grant of responsible government in 1872. He was again the Premier of the last ministry when the Union was established in 1910, and was known as the Gladstone of South Africa.

Then there were the Moltenos and the Schreiners. Sir John Molteno was the first Premier of the Colony in 1872. Mr. W. P. Schreiner was a well-known advocate, for some time Attorney-General, and later on Premier. His sister, Olive Schreiner, was a gifted woman, popular in South Africa and well known wherever the English language is spoken. Her love for mankind was altogether unbounded. Love was written in her eyes and in her face. Although she belonged to a distinguished family and was a learned lady, she was so simple in her habits that she cleaned the utensils in her house herself. Mr. J. X. Merriman, the Moltenos and the Schreiners had

always espoused the cause of the Bantus and coloured people. They had a kindly feeling for the Indians as well, though they made a certain distinction.

Their argument was that as the Hottentots and other races had been the inhabitants of South Africa long before the European settlers, the latter could not deprive them of their natural rights. But as for the Indians, it would not be unfair if laws calculated to remove the danger of their undue competition were enacted. Nevertheless, these noble people always had a warm corner in their hearts for Indians. When Mr. G. K. Gokhale went to South Africa, Mr. Schreiner presided over the Town Hall meeting in Cape Town, where he was accorded his first public reception in that country. Mr. J. X. Merriman also treated him with the greatest courtesy and expressed his sympathy with the Indian cause. There were other Europeans of the type of Mr. Merriman. I have only mentioned these well-known names as typical of their class. The newspapers also in Cape Town were less hostile to Indians than those in other parts of South Africa.

It can be said that the door into South Africa, which was formerly wide open, had thus been almost closed against the Indians at the time of the Boer War. In the Transvaal there was no restriction on immigration except the registration fee of three pounds. When, however, Natal and Cape Colony closed their ports to Indians, the latter had great difficulty in reaching the Transvaal, which was in the interior. They could reach it via Delagoa Bay, a Portuguese port, but the Portuguese had more or less imitated the British, and it became almost impossible to enter from that direction.

## CHAPTER III

### MY FIRST EXPERIENCES

UP TO the year 1893 there were hardly any free Indians in South Africa capable of doing public work on behalf of the Indian community. Those who were educated were, for the most part, clerks, whose knowledge of English was not sufficient for the skilled drafting of petitions and protests which had to be sent to the Administration. They were also obliged to give up all their time to their employers. A second group, who had received a smattering of education, were the descendants of indentured Indian labourers; but these, if at all qualified for public work, were usually in Government service, as interpreters in the law courts, and therefore not in a position to help the Indian cause beyond expressing their fellow-feeling in private.

The Indian community itself was held in the lowest esteem by Europeans throughout the country on account of colour prejudice. All indentured labourers were called 'coolies.' This word means literally a porter or a carrier of a burden. But it was used so extensively in Natal that the Indian indentured labourers themselves began to describe themselves as 'coolies.' Many Europeans called the Indian lawyers and Indian traders 'coolie' lawyers and 'coolie' traders. There were some who could not believe that this name implied an insult, while many used it as a term of deliberate contempt. Free Indians, therefore, tried to draw a distinction between themselves and the indentured labourers. No direct attempt was

made to seek their co-operation in the common cause. Probably it did not strike any one of the traders to enlist their support. If the idea did suggest itself to some of them they felt the risk of making their own position worse by allowing them to join the movement. Since the Indian traders were the first target of attack, the measures for defence were limited to that class. They were thus seriously handicapped by having no knowledge of English and no experience of public work in India. They sought the help of European barristers, had petitions prepared at considerable cost, waited in deputation, and did what they could to mend matters. This was the state of things up to the year 1893.

It will be helpful at this point to keep some important dates in mind. Before the year 1893 Indians had been banished from the Orange Free State by unscrupulous methods. In the Transvaal, Law No. 3 of 1885 was in force with all its obnoxious clauses. In Natal, measures were under contemplation as early as 1892, whose direct object was to allow only indentured labourers to reside in the Colony and to turn out the rest. Everywhere, except in Cape Colony, the very existence of the community was being threatened.

I left India for South Africa in April 1893, on a purely professional visit, without any knowledge of the conditions out there.<sup>1</sup> A well-known firm of Porbandar Memans carried on trade in Durban under the name of Dada Abdulla. An equally well-known and rival firm at Pretoria traded under the name of Tyeb Haji Mahomed. Unfortunately, an important law-suit was pending between the rivals. A partner of the firm of Dada Abdulla

<sup>1</sup> See *Mahatma Gandhi His Own Story*, p. 92.

in Porbandar thought that it might help their case if they engaged me and sent me to South Africa. I had only recently been called to the Bar and was quite a novice in the profession. But he had no fear of my mishandling the law-suit, as he did not want me to conduct the case in court but only to instruct the able European lawyers whom they had retained. I was fond of novel experiences. It was disgusting to me in India to have to give commissions to those who brought me work. The atmosphere of political intrigue in Kathiawar was choking me. The engagement was only for one year, and there seemed no objection against my acceptance of the offer.<sup>1</sup>

There was nothing to lose, because the firm of Dada Abdulla had expressed their willingness to pay all my expenses on the voyage and also in South Africa, and a fee of one hundred and five pounds besides. This arrangement was made through my eldest brother, now deceased, who had been like a father to me. His will was a command to me. He liked the idea of my going to South Africa. So I reached Durban in May 1893.

Being a barrister-at-law, I was well dressed according to my lights when I landed at Durban; and no doubt I had a due sense of my own importance. But I was soon disillusioned by what happened. The partner of Dada Abdulla who had engaged me had already given me an account of things that happened to Indians in Natal. But what I saw there with my own eyes was quite different from the picture he had drawn. There was no blame, however, on his part. He was a frank, simple man, ignorant of the real state of affairs. He had no true idea

<sup>1</sup> The whole account of this is told in detail in *Mahatma Gandhi: His Own Story*, pp. 97-103.

of the hardships to which Indians were subjected. Conditions which implied grave insult had not appeared to him in that light at all. On the very first day after landing I observed that the Europeans meted out most insulting treatment to Indians as a matter of course on different occasions.

I have recorded elsewhere my bitter experience in the courts within a fortnight of my arrival, the hardships I encountered on railway trains, the thrashings I received on the way, and the practical impossibility of securing accommodation in any of the hotels.<sup>1</sup> I had gone there for a single law-suit, prompted by self-interest and curiosity without any political motive; but all these things entered like iron into my soul.

During the first year, therefore, I was merely the witness and the victim of these wrongs. From the standpoint of self-interest in my legal profession South Africa was no good to me. Not only had I no desire, but on the contrary there was a positive disgust in my mind at the very thought of earning money or sojourning in a country where I was insulted every day. Thus I was between the horns of a dilemma.

Two courses were clearly open to me. I might, on the one hand, free myself from my contract with Dada Abdulla on the ground that circumstances had come to my knowledge on my arrival which had not been disclosed to me before. In that case I could run back to India. On the other hand I might bear all the hardships and fulfil my engagement.

While I was still undecided I was pushed out of the

<sup>1</sup> Special instances of these things are given in *Mahatma Gandhi: His Own Story*, pp. 102-105.

train one night by a European police constable at Maritzburg. The train having departed I was left behind sitting in the waiting-room, shivering in the bitter cold. I did not know where my luggage was, nor did I dare enquire of anybody, lest I might be insulted and assaulted over again. Sleep was out of the question. Doubt took possession of my mind.

Late that night I came to the conclusion that to run away back to India would be a cowardly affair. I must accomplish what I had undertaken. This meant that I must reach Pretoria at all costs, without minding insults and even assaults. Pretoria was my goal. This resolution which I made somewhat pacified and strengthened me, but I did not get any sleep that night.

Next morning I sent a telegram to the firm of Dada Abdulla and to the General Manager of the Railway. Replies were received from both. Dada Abdulla and his partner, Sheth Abdulla Haji Adam, at once took strong measures. They wired to their Indian Agents in various places to look after me, and also to the General Manager of the State Railway. The Indian traders at Maritzburg came to see me in response to the telegram received by the local agent. They tried to comfort me, and told me that all of them had met with the same bitter experiences which had pained them greatly at first. But they had at last become used to these things and therefore took little notice of them. Trade and sensitiveness could ill go together. They had therefore made it a rule to pocket insults just as they might pocket cash. They told me how Indians could not enter the railway station by the main entrance, and how difficult it was for them even to purchase tickets. I left for Pretoria the same night.



God, who is the Almighty Searcher of all hearts, soon put my determination to a full test. I suffered further insults and received more beatings on my journey. But all this only confirmed me in my determination to stay in South Africa.

Thus in 1893 I had gained full experience of Indian conditions in Natal and the Transvaal. But I did nothing at the time beyond occasionally talking over the subject with my Indian companions in Pretoria. It appeared to me that to look after the firm's lawsuit and also to take up at the same time the political question of Indian grievances was impossible.

Early in the year 1894 I went back to Durban and booked my passage for India. At the farewell entertainment held by Dada Abdulla in my honour, someone put a copy of the *Natal Mercury* into my hands. I read it and found that the detailed report of the proceedings of the Natal Legislative Council contained a few lines on "Indian Franchise." The local Government was about to introduce a Bill to disfranchise Indians. This could only be the beginning of the end of what little rights they were enjoying. The speeches made in the Council left no doubt about the intention of the Government. I read out the report to the traders and others present and explained the situation as well as I could, suggesting that the Indians should strenuously resist this attack on their rights.

They agreed, but declared that they could not fight the battle themselves and therefore urged me to stay on. So I consented to stay a month or so longer, by which time the struggle would be fought out. The same night I drew up a petition to be presented to the Legislative

Council. A telegram was sent to the Government requesting them to delay the proceedings. A Committee was appointed, with Sheth Abdulla Haji Adam as chairman, and the telegram was sent in his name. The further reading of the Bill was postponed for two days. That petition was the first ever sent by the Indians to a South African Legislature. It was the South African Indians' first experience of such a mode of procedure and a new thrill of enthusiasm passed through the community. Meetings were held every day and more and more persons attended them. The requisite funds were soon over-subscribed. Many volunteers helped in preparing copies, securing signatures and similar work without any remuneration. There were others who both worked and also subscribed to the funds. The colonial-born descendants of the ex-indentured Indians joined in the movement with alacrity. They knew English and wrote a good hand. They did copying and other work ungrudgingly night and day alike. Within a month a memorial with ten thousand signatures was forwarded to Lord Ripon, and the immediate task I had set before myself was accomplished.

Then I asked leave to return to India. But the agitation had roused such keen interest among the Indians that they would not let me go.

"You yourself," they said, "have explained to us that this is the first step taken with a view to our ultimate extinction. Who knows whether the Colonial Secretary will return a favourable reply to our memorial? You have now witnessed our enthusiasm. We are willing to work and we have funds. But for want of a guide, what little has been already done will go to nothing. We therefore regard it to be your duty to stay on."

I also felt it would be well if a permanent organization was formed to watch our Indian interests. But where was I to live, and how? They offered me a regular salary for public work, but I expressly declined. It is not right to receive a large salary for public work. Besides, I was a pioneer. According to my notions at the time, I thought I ought to live in a style usual for barristers, and that would mean great expense. It would be improper to depend for my maintenance upon a body whose activities would necessitate a public appeal for funds. My powers of work would thereby be crippled. For this and similar reasons I flatly refused to accept remuneration for public work. But I suggested that I was prepared to stay if the principal traders among them could see their way to offer me legal work and give me retaining fees for it beforehand. The retainers might be for one year. We might deal with each other for that period, examine the results, and then continue the arrangement if both parties were satisfied. This suggestion was cordially accepted by all.

Then I applied for admission as an Advocate of the Supreme Court of Natal. The Natal Law Society opposed my application on the sole ground that the law did not contemplate having coloured barristers on the roll. The late Mr. Escombe, the famous advocate, who was afterwards Attorney-General and also Premier of Natal, was my Counsel. The prevailing practice for a long time was that the leading barrister should present such applications, without any fees, and Mr. Escombe advocated my cause accordingly. He was also Senior Counsel for my employers. The Supreme Court upheld the application. Thus the Law Society's opposition brought me

into further public prominence. The newspapers of South Africa ridiculed the Law Society and some of them even congratulated me.

The temporary committee was now placed on a permanent footing. I had never attended a session of the Indian National Congress, but had often read about it. Dadabhai, the Grand Old Man of India, had always been before my mind as a model of a patriotic Indian leader. I had very greatly admired him and was therefore already a National Congress enthusiast, and wished to popularize the name. So I advised the Indians to call their organization the Natal Indian Congress. I laid before them very imperfectly what meagre knowledge I had of Indian National Congress affairs.

Anyhow, the Natal Indian Congress was founded about May 1894. There was this difference between the Indian and the Natal Congress, that the latter organization worked throughout the year and only those who paid annual subscriptions of at least three pounds were admitted to membership. Amounts exceeding that sum were gratefully received. Endeavours were made to obtain the maximum from each member. There were about half a dozen members who paid twenty-four pounds a year. There was a considerable number of those paying twelve pounds. About three hundred members were enrolled every month. They included Hindus, Musalmans, Parsis, and Christians, and came from all Indian Provinces that were represented in Natal. The work proceeded with great vigour throughout the first year. Indian merchants went to distant townships where Indians resided, in their own conveyances, enrolling new members and collecting subscriptions. Everybody did

not pay for the mere asking. Some required to be persuaded. This persuasion was a political training, and made people acquainted with all the facts of the situation.

Again, a meeting of the Congress was held at least once a month, when detailed accounts were presented and adopted. Current events were explained and recorded in the minute-books. Members asked various questions. Fresh subjects were considered. The advantage of all this was that those who never spoke at such meetings got accustomed to the art of speaking. The speeches, again, had to be in proper form. All this was a novel experience. In the meanwhile, the welcome news came that Lord Ripon had disallowed the Disfranchising Bill, and this redoubled our zeal and self-confidence.

Along with the external agitation, the question of internal improvement was also taken up. The Europeans throughout South Africa had been agitating against the Indians on the ground of their ways of life. They always argued that the Indians were very dirty and close-fisted. They were said to live in the same place where they traded, and to spend nothing on their own comforts. How, then, could cleanly open-handed Europeans compete in trade with such parsimonious and dirty people? Lectures were delivered, debates held, and suggestions made at Congress meetings on subjects such as domestic sanitation, personal hygiene, the necessity of having separate buildings for houses and shops. The proceedings were conducted in Gujarati.

It is easy to see what an amount of practical and political education the Indians thus received. Under the auspices of the Natal Indian Congress a new society

called the Natal Educational Association was formed for the benefit of the young Indians, who, being the children of ex-indentured labourers, were born in Natal and spoke English. Its members paid a nominal fee. The chief objects of the Association were to provide a meeting-place for these youths, to create in them a love for the mother country, India, and to give them general information about it. It was also intended to impress upon them that free Indians considered them to be their own kith and kin. The funds of the Congress were large enough to leave a surplus after defraying all its expenses. This surplus was devoted to the purchase of land, which yields an income even up to the present day.

I have deliberately entered into all these details, because without them it is not possible to understand how Satyagraha spontaneously sprang into existence. I am compelled to omit the remarkable subsequent story of the Congress, how it was confronted with difficulties, how Government officials attacked it, and how it escaped without serious injury from these attacks. But one important fact must be placed on record. Steps were at once taken to save the Indian community from the habit of exaggeration. Attempts were always made to draw their attention to their own shortcomings. Whatever force there was in the arguments of the European was duly acknowledged. Every occasion when it was possible to co-operate with Europeans on terms of equality was heartily made use of. The newspapers were supplied with as much information about the Indian Community as they could publish, and whenever Indians were unfairly attacked in the Press replies were sent to the newspapers concerned.

There was an association in the Transvaal similar to the Natal Indian Congress. A similar body was formed in Cape Town also with a constitution different from that of the Natal Indian Congress and the Transvaal Indian Association. Still the activities of all three bodies were nearly identical.

Thus the Natal Indian Congress was placed on a permanent footing. I spent nearly two years and a half in Natal, doing for the most part political work. Then I saw clearly that if I was still to prolong my stay in South Africa I must bring over my family from India. It seemed also advisable for me to make a brief stay in India, as far as time allowed, acquainting the political leaders there with South African conditions and seeking their active assistance. The Congress allowed me leave of absence for six months. Sheth Adamji Miankhan, the well-known merchant of Natal, was appointed Secretary in my stead. He discharged his duties with great ability. He had a fair knowledge of English and had studied Gujarati in the ordinary course. As he had mercantile dealings all day long with the Zulus, he had acquired an intimate knowledge of the Zulu language and was well conversant with their manners and customs. He was a man of very quiet disposition who was not given to much speech. Fidelity, patience, firmness, presence of mind, courage and common sense are far more essential qualifications for holding responsible positions than a knowledge of English. Where these qualities are absent, the best literary attainments are of little use in public work.

It was May 1896 when I reached India. Since steamers from Natal were then more easily available for

Calcutta than Bombay, I travelled on board one of them as an ordinary passenger.

While proceeding from Calcutta to Bombay, I missed my train on the way and had to stop at Allahabad for a day. But this materially helped the work I had come to perform. For I saw Mr. Chesney of the *Pioneer*, and he talked with me courteously, making full enquiries into Indian conditions in South Africa. In the end, he told me frankly that his sympathies were with the colonials. He promised, however, that if ever I wrote anything he would read it and notice it in his paper. This was good enough for me.

It was during this visit that I had the privilege of seeing the great Indian Congress leaders and others, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, Justice Badruddin Tyabji, Justice Ranade in Bombay, Lokamanya Tilak and his circle, Professor Bhandarkar and Gopal Krishna Gokhale in Poona.

I cannot resist the temptation of describing here a sacred reminiscence of Poona, although it is not entirely relevant to the subject. The Sarvajanik Sabha was controlled by Lokamanya Tilak, while Mr. Gokhale was connected with the Deccan Sabha. First I saw Tilak Maharaj.<sup>1</sup> When I spoke to him about my intention of holding a meeting in Poona, he asked me if I had seen "Gopalrao." I did not understand at first whom he meant. He therefore asked me if I had seen Gopalrao Krishna Gokhale and if I knew him at all well.

"I have not seen him," said I; "I know him only by name and mean to see him."

<sup>1</sup> Maharaj is sometimes added as a title of respect for one who is a Brahman.



"You do not seem to be familiar with Indian politics," said Tilak Maharaj.

"After my return from England," I replied, "I only stayed in India for a short time. I had not then applied myself to the political question because I thought it beyond my capacity."

"In that case," said Lokamanya Tilak, "I must give you some information. There are two parties in Poona, one represented by the Sarvajanik Sabha and the other by the Deccan Sabha."

"I know nothing about this matter," I replied.

"It is quite easy to hold meetings here," said Lokamanya Tilak. "But it seemed to me that you wish to lay your case before all parties. Now, I like your idea and wish to help you. But if a member of the Sarvajanik Sabha is selected to preside over your meeting in Poona, no member of the Deccan Sabha will attend it, and *vice versa*. You should therefore find out a non-partisan as a chairman. I can only offer my own suggestion. Do you know Professor Bhandarkar? He is considered by everyone to be a neutral. He does not take part in politics, but perhaps you can induce him to preside over your meeting because it is of a non-party character. Speak to Gopalrao Krishna Gokhale about this and seek his advice. If a man of Professor Bhandarkar's position consents to preside, then I am certain that both parties will join in the meeting and make it a success. At any rate, you can count upon our fullest help in the matter."

Gokhale at once saw me. I have told the story elsewhere how I fell in love with him at very first sight. Gokhale liked the advice which Lokamanya had given me. Accordingly I paid my respects to the venerable

Professor Bhandarkar. He heard attentively the whole history of the Indian wrongs in Natal and the Transvaal.

"You see," he said at the end of my story, "I rarely take part in public affairs. Besides, I am getting old. But what you have told me has stirred me very deeply indeed. I like your idea of seeking the co-operation of all parties. You are young and ignorant of the political conditions in Poona. Please tell the members of both parties that I have complied with your request."

Thus a successful meeting was held in Poona. The leaders of both parties attended and spoke in support of the cause.

It now remains also to note what further steps were taken to enlist support from England itself. It was essential, in the first place, to establish relations with the British Committee of the Indian National Congress, which was then a powerful body in London. Weekly letters, full of particulars, were therefore written to Dadabhai Naoroji, the Grand Old Man of India, and to Sir William Wedderburn, the Chairman of the Committee. Whenever there was an occasion to send copies of representations, a sum of at least ten pounds was remitted as a contribution towards the postal charges and general expenditure of the British Committee.

There still remains in my mind a striking recollection of Dadabhai Naoroji. He was not the Chairman of the Committee. But it seemed to us that the proper course was to send money to him, in the first instance, so that he might then forward it himself to the Chairman. But Dadabhai returned the very first instalment and suggested that we should remit the money intended for the British Committee directly to Sir William

Wedderburn. 'The prestige of the Committee, he wrote, would increase if we approached it through Sir William Wedderburn direct.

Dadabhai, though far advanced in age, was very regular in his correspondence. Even when he had nothing particular to write about he would acknowledge the receipt of letters by return of post with a word of encouragement thrown in. These letters he used to write personally, and kept copies of them in his tissue-paper book.

Although we had called our organization the "Natal Indian Congress" we never intended to make our grievances a mere party question. We therefore corresponded with gentlemen belonging to other political views in England as well, with the full knowledge of Dadabhai. The most prominent among them were Sir Muncherjee Bhownaggee and Sir W. W. Hunter. Sir Muncherjee was then himself a Member of Parliament. His assistance was valuable, and he used to favour us with important suggestions. But if there was anyone who realized the importance of the Indian question in South Africa, even before the Indians themselves, it was Sir W. W. Hunter. He was the editor of the Indian section of *The Times*, wherein, ever since we first addressed him, he continually discussed our question in its true perspective, thus rendering us inestimable assistance. He wrote personal letters to several gentlemen in full support of our cause. Almost every week, when some important question was being decided, he used to write to us the fullest information available about it.

I have his very first letter still with me. "I am sorry," he wrote, "to read of the situation in Natal. You have

been conducting your struggle courteously, peacefully and without exaggeration. My sympathies are entirely with you. I will do my best publicly as well as privately to see that justice is done to you. I am certain that we cannot yield even an inch of ground further. Your demand being so reasonable, no impartial person would even suggest that you should moderate it."

This was the purport of Sir William Hunter's letter, and he reproduced it almost word for word in the first article that he wrote for *The Times* on the question. His attitude remained the same throughout, and Lady Hunter wrote to me that shortly before his death he had prepared an outline of a series of articles which he had planned for *The Times* on the Indian question in South Africa.

I have mentioned already the name of Mansukhlal Nazar. This Indian gentleman was deputed to England on behalf of the Indian Community at a later date in order to explain the situation in detail. He was instructed to work with members of all parties, and during his stay in England he kept in touch with Sir W. W. Hunter, Sir Muncherjee Bhownaggree and also with the British Committee of the Indian National Congress. He was likewise in touch with several retired officers of the Indian Civil Service, with the India Office, and with the Colonial Office. Thus our endeavours to gain helpers in Great Britain were directed in all possible quarters. The result was the condition of Indians overseas became at last a question of first-rate importance in the eyes of the Imperial Government.

After this, I thought that my work in South Africa was now over. I had stayed there six years instead of

one, as originally intended. The outline of the work before us was fairly fixed. Still, I could not leave South Africa without the willing consent of the Indian community.

At last, after thinking the matter over, I informed my colleagues that I intended taking up public work in India. I had learnt in South Africa the lesson of service instead of self-interest, and was longing for opportunities of such work in India. Mansukhlal Nazar was there and so was Advocate Khan, who were both able to carry on the work. Some Indian youths had also returned from England as barristers. In such circumstances it would not be improper if I returned to India.

When I urged all these arguments, I was permitted to return only on one condition: that if an unexpected situation arose in South Africa requiring my presence, the community might recall me any day and I should come back at once.

In such a contingency they undertook to pay my travelling expenses and whatever amount was incurred on my behalf during my stay in South Africa. To this arrangement I agreed, and returned to India.

I decided to practise in Bombay as a barrister, primarily with a view to public work under the advice and guidance of Gokhale. In the second place I wished to make a living for myself side by side with active participation in public work. So I rented chambers in Bombay and began to get some practice as a lawyer. Thanks to my close connexion with South Africa, clients who had returned from that country gave me work which more than sufficed for my needs.

## CHAPTER IV

### AFTER THE BOER WAR

PEACE WAS NEVER to be my portion in this life. Hardly had I been in Bombay for three or four months when I received an urgent cable from South Africa stating that the situation there was very serious, that Mr. Chamberlain was expected shortly, and that my presence was necessary.

I wound up my office in Bombay immediately and started for South Africa by the first available steamer. This was near the end of 1902. The cablegram did not contain full details. I guessed that there was trouble in the Transvaal. But I went out to South Africa hurriedly without my family; for I thought I would be able to return to India in five or six months. When I reached Durban and heard what had happened, I was amazed.

Many of us had hoped that the position of Indians throughout South Africa would improve after the Boer War. At any rate, we did not anticipate trouble in the Transvaal and the Free State; for Lord Lansdowne and Lord Selborne and other high functionaries had declared, when the war broke out, that the treatment accorded the Indians by the Boers was one of the causes of the war. The British Agent at Pretoria had often told me that if the Transvaal became a British Colony, all the grievances under which the Indians laboured would be instantly redressed. The Europeans, too, believed that as the Transvaal was now under the British flag, the old laws of the Boer Republic directed against the Indians

could not be enforced. This principle was so widely accepted that the auctioneers who before the war were not ready to accept offers from Indians for the purchase of land, now openly accepted them. Many Indians thus purchased lands at public auctions; but when they tendered the deeds of transfer to the revenue officer for registration the officer in charge refused to register the deeds, quoting Law No. 3 of 1885.

All this I learnt on landing at Durban. The leaders said that Mr. Chamberlain would first come to Durban, and we must there acquaint him with the situation in Natal. When this was done, I was to follow him to the Transvaal.

A deputation waited upon Mr. Chamberlain in Natal. He gave it a courteous hearing and promised to confer with the Natal Government on the subject of its representations. Personally I did not expect that the laws which had been promulgated in Natal before the war would be modified very soon.

Before the Boer War, any Indian could at any time enter the Transvaal. I observed that this was not the case any longer. The restrictions, however, equally applied to all—Europeans as well as Indians. The condition of the country was such that if a large number of people entered the Transvaal all at once there would not be sufficient food and clothing to go round, as all the shops had not reopened since the war. The goods stocked in the shops had been unceremoniously appropriated by the late Boer Government. I thought, therefore, that if the restrictions were merely temporary, there was no reason for apprehension.

But then there was a difference in the procedure by

which a European and an Indian could obtain a permit, and this afforded ground for misgiving and alarm. Permit offices were opened in the various parts of South Africa. For all practical purposes a European could obtain a permit for the mere asking, while an Asiatic Department was created in the Transvaal for dealing with Indians. The creation of this special department was a new departure. Indians were required to apply to the Head of that department in the first instance. After he had granted their application, they would generally obtain permits at Durban or any other port.

If I had to go through all these formalities there was no hope of my getting a permit before Mr. Chamberlain left the Transvaal. The Indians in the Transvaal could not procure a permit for me. They had, therefore, relied upon my connections in Durban. I did not know the Permit Officer personally; but as I knew the Police Superintendent of Durban I asked him to accompany me to the permit office. He consented and gave the necessary assurances. I obtained a permit on the strength of the fact that I had stayed in the Transvaal for a year in 1893, and thus reached Pretoria.

The atmosphere in Pretoria was decidedly ominous. I could see that the Asiatic Department was merely a frightful engine of oppression for the Indian. The officers in charge were some of the adventurers who had accompanied the army from India to South Africa during the war, and had settled there in order to try their luck. Some of them were corrupt. Two officers were even prosecuted for bribery. The jury declared them not guilty. But since really there was no doubt entertained about their guilt they were subsequently dismissed from



service. Partiality was the order of the day. When a separate department is thus created and the restriction of existing rights is the sole reason for its existence, officers are naturally inclined to devise fresh restrictions from time to time in order to justify their own occupation. This is exactly what happened in the Transvaal.

I saw that I had to begin all my work over again from the very start. The Asiatic Department could not at once discover how I managed to enter the Transvaal. They did not venture to ask me directly. I imagine they thought me too open in my conduct to get smuggled into the country. A deputation from Pretoria prepared to wait upon Mr. Chamberlain. I drafted the memorial for submission to him, but the Asiatic Department excluded me from the deputation. Though I had succeeded in entering the Transvaal, they could still successfully prevent me from waiting on Mr. Chamberlain.

So the community was asked by the department to submit the names of the representatives who were to form the deputation. Colour prejudice was, of course, in evidence everywhere in South Africa, but I was not prepared to find here the miserable underhand dealing among officials that I was familiar with in India. In South Africa the public departments were maintained for the good of the people, and were responsible to public opinion. Hence officials in charge had a certain courtesy of manner and humility about them, and coloured people also got the benefit of it more or less. With the coming of these officers from Asia, however, came also its autocracy, and the habits that the autocrats had imbibed there. In South Africa there was a kind of responsible Government, whereas the commodity

imported from Asia was autocracy pure and simple; for the Indian people had no responsible Government, there being a foreign Power governing them. In South Africa the Europeans were settled emigrants. They had become South African citizens and had control over the department officers. But the autocrats from Asia now appeared on the scene, and the Indians in consequence found themselves between the devil and the deep sea.

I had a fair taste of this autocracy. First of all I was summoned to see the chief of the department, an officer from Ceylon. Lest I should appear to exaggerate when I say that I was "summoned" to see the chief, I would make myself clear. No written order was sent to me at all. Indian leaders often had to visit the Asiatic Department. Among these was Sheth Tyeb Haji Khan Mahomed. The chief of the office asked who I was and why I had come there.

"He is our adviser," said Tyeb Sheth, "and he has come here at our request."

"Then what are *we* here for? Have *we* not been appointed to protect you?" asked the autocrat. "What can Gandhi know of the conditions here?"

Tyeb Sheth answered the charge as best he could: "Of course you are here," he said politely; "but Gandhi is our man. He knows our language and understands us. You are, after all, officials."

The Sahib ordered Tyeb Sheth to fetch me before him. I went to the Sahib in company with him and others. No seats were offered, we were all kept standing.

"What brings you here?" said the Sahib, addressing me.

"I have come here at the request of my fellow-countrymen to help them with my advice," I replied.

"But don't you know," he asked, "that you have no right to come here? The permit you hold was given you by mistake. You must go back. You shall not wait on Mr. Chamberlain. It is for the protection of the Indians here that the Asiatic Department has been especially created. Well, you may go."

With this he dismissed me, giving me no opportunity to make any reply. But he detained my companions. He gave them a sound scolding, and advised them to send me away. They returned thoroughly chagrined. We were now confronted with a quite unexpected situation.

I smarted under the insult, but as I had pocketed many such in the past I had become fairly inured to them. Therefore I decided to forget this latest one, and take what course a dispassionate view of the case might suggest.

We received a letter from the Chief of the Asiatic Department to the effect that as I had seen Mr. Chamberlain in Durban, it had been found necessary to omit my name from the Transvaal deputation.

The letter was more than my co-workers could endure. They proposed to drop the idea of a deputation altogether. I pointed out to them the awkward situation in which this would leave them.

"If you do not represent your case before Mr. Chamberlain," said I, "it will be presumed that you have no case at all. After all, the representation has to be made in writing and we have got it ready. It does not matter in the least whether I read it or someone else reads it. Mr. Chamberlain is not going to argue the matter out with us. I am afraid we must swallow the insult."

I had scarcely finished speaking when Tyeb Sheth

cried out: "Does not an insult to you amount to an insult to the community? How can we forget that you are our representative?"

"That is perfectly true," said I. "But even the community will have to pocket insults like these. Have you any alternative to offer?"

"Come what may," asked Tyeb Sheth, "why should we swallow a fresh insult? Nothing worse can possibly happen to us. Have we many rights to lose?"

I liked the spirited reply he made to me, but I also knew that the spirit was of no avail. Therefore I pacified my friends and advised them to appoint in my place Mr. George Godfrey, an Indian barrister.

So Mr. Godfrey led the deputation. Mr. Chamberlain referred in his reply to my exclusion. "Rather than hear," he said, "the same representative over and over again, is it not better to have someone new?" Thus he tried to heal the wound, but only increased it.

Mr. Chamberlain spoke as he had been tutored by the Asiatic Department, which in this way sought to import into the Transvaal the atmosphere which pervades India.

Little did Mr. Chamberlain know that I had lived in the Transvaal, and even if I had not I was fully conversant with the Indian situation there. There was only one pertinent question: Who possessed the best knowledge of the situation in the Transvaal? The Indians had already answered for themselves that question by asking me to come all the way from India. But it is no new experience to find that arguments based on reason do not always appeal to men in authority. Mr. Chamberlain was then so much under the influence of the men on the

spot and so anxious to humour the Europeans that there was little hope of his doing justice. Nevertheless, the deputation waited on him, in order that no legitimate step for obtaining redress might be omitted, whether by oversight or through a sense of wounded self-respect.

I was now confronted by a dilemma even more difficult than that which faced me in 1894. From one standpoint it seemed I could return to India as soon as Mr. Chamberlain left South Africa. On the other hand I could clearly see that if I returned with the vain idea of serving on a larger field in India while I knew well the danger which stared the South African Indians in the face, the spirit of service which I had acquired would be stultified. I thought that even if I should not have to live altogether in South Africa I must remain there at least until the gathering clouds were dispersed.

With this in my mind I soon applied for admission to practise law in the Transvaal. There was some apprehension that the Law Society would here also oppose my application, but it proved groundless. I was thus enrolled as an attorney of the Supreme Court, and opened an office in Johannesburg. I had given up all hope of returning to India in the near future. Yet I had promised my wife that I would return home within a year. The year was gone without any prospect of my going back, and I decided to send for her and the children.

On the boat bringing them to South Africa, Ramdas, my third son, had injured his arm while playing with the ship's captain. The captain had looked after him as well as he could and had him attended to by the ship's doctor. Ramdas therefore landed with his arm in a sling. The doctor had advised that as soon as we reached home

the wound should be dressed by a qualified surgeon. But this was the time when I was full of faith in my experiments in earth treatment as a cure. I had even succeeded in persuading some of my clients who had faith in my quackery to try the earth-and-water treatment.

What, then, was I to do for Ramdas? He was just eight years old. I asked him if he would mind my dressing his wound. With a smile he said that he did not mind at all. It was not possible for him at that age to decide what was the best thing for him, but he knew my habit of home treatment and had faith enough to trust himself to me. In fear and trembling I undid the bandage, washed the wound, applied a clean earth poultice, and tied the arm up again. This sort of dressing went on daily for about a month until the wound was completely healed. There was no hitch, and the wound took no more time to heal than the ship's doctor had said it would under the usual treatment.

This, and other experiments, enhanced my faith in such household remedies, and I now proceeded to practise them with more self-confidence. I widened the sphere of their application, trying earth and water and fasting treatment in cases of wounds, fevers, dyspepsia, jaundice, and other complaints, with success on most occasions. But nowadays I have not the confidence which I had in South Africa, and experience has even shown me that these experiments involve obvious risks.

The reference here, therefore, to these experiments is not meant to demonstrate their success. I cannot claim complete success for any experiments. Even medical men can make no such claim about their experiments. My object is only to show that he who would go in for novel

experiments must begin with himself. That leads to a quicker discovery of truth, and God is always protecting the honest experimenter.

The risks involved while making experiments in cultivating intimate personal contacts with Europeans were always as grave as those in the nature of trying to make physical healing of disease—only those risks were of a different kind. But in cultivating these contacts I never so much as thought of the risks involved.

I invited Polak to come and stay with me, and we began to live like blood brothers. Mrs. Polak and he had been engaged to be married for some time, but the marriage had been postponed for a propitious moment. I have an impression that Polak wanted to put some money by before he settled down to a married life. He knew Ruskin much better than I did, but his Western surroundings were a bar against his translating Ruskin's teachings immediately into practice.

"When there is a heart union, as in your case," I pleaded with him, "it is hardly right to postpone marriage merely for financial considerations. If poverty is a bar, poor men can never marry. And then you are now staying with me. There is no question of household expenses in your case. I think that you should get married as soon as possible."

I had never to argue a thing twice with Polak. He appreciated the force of my argument and immediately opened correspondence with his fiancée on the subject. She gladly accepted the proposal and in a few months reached Johannesburg. Any expense over the wedding was out of the question. Not even a special dress was thought necessary. They needed no religious rites to

seal the bond. Mrs. Polak was a Christian by birth and Mr. Polak was a Jew. Their common religion was the religion of higher humanity.

I may mention in passing an amusing incident in connection with this wedding. The Registrar of European marriages in the Transvaal could not register marriages between black or coloured people. In the wedding in question I acted as the best man. It would have been easy to get a European friend for the purpose, but Polak would not for a moment listen to the suggestion. So we three went to the Registrar of Marriages together. The poor man was puzzled. How could he be sure that the parties to a marriage in which I acted as best man were whites? He proposed, therefore, to postpone registration pending enquiries.

The next day was a Sunday. The day following that was New Year's Day—a public holiday. To postpone the date of the solemnly arranged wedding on such a flimsy pretext was more than I could put up with. I happened to know the Chief Magistrate, who was head of the Registration Department. So I appeared before him with the couple. He laughed and gave me a note to the Registrar, and the marriage was duly registered.

Up to now the Europeans living with us had been more or less known to me before. But now an English lady who was an utter stranger to us had entered our family. I do not remember ever having a difference with the newly married couple, but even if this had occurred it would have been no more than what happened in the best regulated homogeneous families. And let it be remembered that mine would be considered an essentially heterogeneous family, where people of all



kinds and temperaments were freely admitted. Indeed, the distinction between heterogeneous and homogeneous, when analysed, is discovered to be merely imaginary. We are all one human family.

I introduced as much simplicity as was possible in a barrister's house. It was impossible to do without a certain amount of furniture. The change was internal more than external. The liking for doing personally all the physical labour increased. Therefore I began to bring children also under that discipline.

Instead of buying baker's bread we began to prepare unleavened wholemeal bread at home according to the recipe of Kuhne. Common mill flour was no good for this, and the use of hand-ground flour, it was thought, would ensure more simplicity, health and economy. So I purchased a hand-mill for £7. The iron wheel was too heavy to be tackled by one man, but it was easy for two. Polak and I and the children usually worked it. Mrs. Polak now joined us on her arrival. The grinding proved very beneficial exercise for the children. Neither this nor any other work was ever imposed upon them, but it was a pastime to them to come and lend a hand, and they were at liberty to break off whenever tired. But the children, including those whom I shall have occasion to introduce later, as a rule never failed me. Not that there were no laggards at all, but most did their work cheerfully enough. I can recall few youngsters in those days fighting shy of work or pleading fatigue. We were a happy family together.

Although I had furnished the house with care, yet it failed to have any hold on me. Therefore no sooner had I launched forth on this new form of life than I began

to cut down expenses. The washerman's bill was heavy, and since also he was by no means noted for his punctuality, even two to three dozen shirts and collars proved insufficient for me. Collars had to be changed daily, and shirts, if not daily, at least every alternate day. This meant double expense, which appeared to me unnecessary. So I equipped myself with a washing outfit in order to economize. Then I bought a book on washing and studied the art very carefully indeed. This no doubt added to my work, but its novelty made it a pleasure, and it became a hobby in my spare time.

I shall never forget the first collar that I washed for myself. I had used more starch than was necessary; the iron had not been hot enough, and for fear of burning the collar I had not pressed it sufficiently. The result was that although the collar was fairly stiff the superfluous starch continually dropped off. I went to the law court with this collar on, thus inviting the ridicule of my brother practitioners; but even in those days I could be impervious to ridicule, and in these matters I was quite hardened.

"Hallo," said one of them, "what has happened to your collar?"

"Well," said I, "this is my first experiment at washing my own collars, and hence the loose starch. But it does not trouble me a bit, and then there is the advantage of providing you with so much fun."

"But surely," asked my friend, "there is no lack of laundries here?"

"The laundry bill is very heavy," said I. "The charge for washing a collar is almost as much as its price, and even then there is the eternal dependence on the washer-

man. I prefer by far to wash my things with my own hands."

But I could not make my friends appreciate the beauty of self-help. In course of time I became an expert washerman so far as my own work went, and my washing at last became in no way inferior to the laundry washing. My collars were no less stiff or shiny than others that had come from the laundry.

When Gokhale came to South Africa, he had with him a scarf which was a gift from Mahadeo Govind Ranade. He treasured this memento with the utmost care and used it only on very special occasions. One such occasion was the banquet given in his honour by the Johannesburg Indians. The scarf was creased and it needed ironing. It was not possible to send it to the laundry and get it back in time. I offered to try my art.

"I can trust to your capacity as a lawyer," said Gokhale, "but not as a washerman. What if you should soil it? Do you realize what it means to me?"

He then narrated to me with evident pleasure the story of the gift. I still insisted, guaranteed good work, got his permission to iron it, and won his certificate. After that I did not mind if the rest of the world refused me its certificate as a washerman, for I had Gokhale's.

In the same way that I freed myself from the slavery of the washerman I threw off dependence on the barber. All Indians who go to England learn there at least the art of shaving; but none, to my knowledge, learn to cut their own hair. I had to learn that too. I once went to an English haircutter in Pretoria. He contemptuously refused to cut my hair. I certainly felt hurt, but immediately purchased a pair of clippers and cut my hair

before the mirror. I succeeded more or less in cutting the front hair, but I must confess that I spoiled the back. My barrister friends in court shook their sides with laughter when they saw the result of my experiment. "Hallo!" they cried. "Why! What's wrong with your hair, Gandhi? Have the rats been at it?"

"No," said I, enjoying the joke. "The white barber would not condescend to touch my hair, so I preferred to cut it myself, no matter how badly I did it."

This reply did not surprise my friends, who by this time had begun to understand my idiosyncrasies and account for them. The barber was not at fault in having refused to cut my hair, and I did not blame him for it, in my own mind, at the time. For there was every chance of his losing his custom if he should serve coloured men. In India itself we do not allow our barbers to serve our untouchable brethren. I got this reward in South Africa not once, but many times, and the conviction that it was the punishment for our sins saved me from becoming angry.

The peculiar and varied forms in which my passion for self-help and extreme simplicity ultimately expressed itself will duly appear in the course of this present narrative. I shall tell later on the story of Tolstoy Farm. The seed had long been sown. It only needed careful and continuous watering to take root, to blossom and bear fruit. The watering came in due course.

We had engaged a servant to look after the house. He lived with us as a member of the family, and the children used to help him with his work. The municipal sweeper removed the nightsoil, but we personally attended to the cleaning of the closet instead of asking or expecting

the servant to do it. This proved a good training for the children. The result was that none of my sons developed any aversion for scavenger's work, and they naturally got a good grounding in general sanitation. There was hardly any illness in the home in Johannesburg, but whenever there was any, the nursing was willingly done by the children. I will not say that I was indifferent to their literary education, but I certainly did not hesitate to sacrifice it in these higher interests, as I regarded them. My sons have therefore some reason for grievance against me. Indeed, they have occasionally given expression to it, and I must plead guilty to a certain extent.

The desire to give them a literary education was always there. I even endeavoured to give it to them myself, but every now and then there was some hitch or other. As I had made no other arrangement for their private tuition, I used to get them to walk with me daily to the office and back home, a distance of about five miles in all. This gave them a fair amount of exercise during these walks. I tried to instruct them by conversation, if there was no one else claiming my attention. All my children, excepting the eldest, Harilal, who had stayed away in India, were brought up in Johannesburg in this manner. Had I been able to devote at least one hour to their literary education, with strict regularity, I should have given them, in my opinion, an ideal education. But it has been my regret that I failed to ensure for them enough training in that direction.

My eldest son has often given vent to his distress privately before me and publicly in the Press; my other sons have generously forgiven the failure as unavoidable. I am not heartbroken over it, and the regret, if any, is

that I did not prove an ideal father. But I hold that I sacrificed their literary training to what I genuinely believed to be a service to the Indian community. At the same time I am quite clear that I have not been negligent in fulfilling whatever was needful for building up their characters, and I believe it is the bounden duty of every parent to provide for this properly. Whenever, in spite of my endeavour, my sons have been found wanting in character, it is my certain conviction that they have reflected, not want of care on my part only, but the effects of both their parents. For children inherit the qualities of their parents no less than their physical features. Environment does play an important part, but the original capital on which the child starts in life is inherited from its ancestors. I have also seen children successfully surmounting the effects of an evil inheritance. That is due to inner purity being an inherent attribute of the soul.

Polak and I had often very heated discussions about the desirability or otherwise of giving the children an English education. It has always been my conviction that Indian parents who train their children to think and talk in English from their infancy, betray their children and their country. They deprive them of the spiritual and social heritage of the nation and render them to that extent unfit for the service of the country. Having these convictions, I made a point of always talking to my children in Gujarati. Polak never liked this. He thought that I was spoiling their future. He contended, with all the vigour and love at his command, that if children were to learn a universal language, like English, from their infancy, they would easily gain a

considerable advance over others in the race of life. He failed to convince me. I do not remember, on the other hand, whether I convinced him as to the correctness of my attitude or whether he gave me up as too obstinate.

This all happened about twenty years ago, and my convictions have only deepened with my experiences. Even though my sons have suffered for want of a full literary education, the knowledge of the vernacular that they naturally acquired has been all to the good, inasmuch as they do not appear when in India to be the foreigners they would otherwise have seemed to be. They naturally became bilingual, speaking and writing English with fair ease, because of daily contact with a large circle of English friends and because of their stay in a country where English is the chief language spoken.

## CHAPTER V

### A SIMPLER LIFE

THE PROBLEM OF further simplifying my life and of doing some concrete act of service to my fellow-men had been constantly agitating me, when a leper came to my door. I had not got the heart to dismiss him merely with a meal. So I offered him shelter, dressed his wound, and began to look after him. But I could not go on like that indefinitely. I could not afford to keep him always with me, and I lacked the will to do so. So I sent him to the Government Hospital.

Nevertheless, I was ill at ease, and I longed for some humanitarian work of a permanent nature. So I found time to serve in the small hospital. This meant two hours every morning, including the time taken in going to and from the hospital. This work brought me some peace of mind. The special duty consisted in ascertaining the patients' complaints, laying the facts before the doctor and dispensing the prescriptions. It brought me in close touch with the suffering Indians.

The question of the rearing of children had been ever before me. I had two sons born in South Africa, and my service in the hospital was very useful to me in solving the question of their upbringing. My independent spirit was a constant source of trial to me. My wife and I had decided to have the best medical aid at the time of her delivery; but if the doctor and the nurse were to leave us in the lurch at the critical moment, what was I to do? Besides, the nurse had to be an Indian. And the diffi-



culty of getting a trained Indian nurse in South Africa can be easily imagined from the similar difficulty in India. So I studied the things necessary for safe delivery. I read Dr. Tribhuvandas' book, *Ma-ne Shikhaman*—"Advice to a Mother"—and I nursed both my children according to the instructions given in the book, tempered here and there by such experience as I had gained elsewhere.

The birth of the last child put me to the severest test of all. The travail came on quite suddenly. The doctor was not immediately available, and some time was lost in fetching the midwife. Even if one had been on the spot, she could not have helped delivery. I had to see through the safe delivery of the baby myself. My careful study of the subject in Dr. Tribhuvandas' work was of inestimable help. I was not nervous.

I am convinced that for the proper upbringing of children the parents ought to have a general knowledge of the care and nursing of babies. At every step I have seen the advantages of a thorough study of the subject. My children would not have enjoyed the general good health that they possess to-day had I not studied the subject and turned my knowledge to account. We labour under a sort of superstition, that the child has nothing to learn during the first five years of its life. On the contrary, the fact is that the child never learns in after-life what it does in its first five years. The education of the child begins with conception. The physical and mental conceptions are reproduced in the baby. Then during the period of pregnancy it continues to be affected by the mother's moods, desires and temperament, as also by her ways of life. After birth the child imitates the

parents, and for a considerable number of years entirely depends on them for its growth.

I had been devoted to a monogamous ideal ever since my marriage. Faithfulness to my wife was a part of my love of Truth. But it was in South Africa that I came to realize the importance of observing Brahmacharya, even with respect to my wife. I cannot definitely say what circumstances, or what book it was, that set my thoughts in that direction, but I have a recollection that the predominant factor was the influence of Raychandbhai, of whom I have already written.\* I can still recall a conversation that I had with him. On one occasion I spoke to him in high praise of Mrs. Gladstone's devotion to her husband. I had read somewhere that Mrs. Gladstone insisted on preparing tea for Mr. Gladstone, even in the House of Commons, and that this had become a rule in the life of this illustrious couple, whose actions were governed by regularity. I spoke of this to the poet Raychandbhai and incidentally eulogized conjugal love.

"Which of the two do you prize more," asked Raychandbhai, "the love of Mrs. Gladstone for her husband as his wife or her devoted service irrespective of her relation to Mr. Gladstone? Supposing she had been his sister, or his devoted servant, and had administered to him with the same attention, what would you have said? Do we not have instances of such devoted sisters or servants? Supposing you had found the same loving devotion in a male servant, would you have been pleased in the same way as in Mrs. Gladstone's case? I would like you to examine the viewpoint suggested by me."

\* See *Mahatma Gandhi: His Own Story*, pp. 80, 81 and 122.

Raychandbhai was himself married. I have an impression that at the moment his words sounded harsh, but they gripped me irresistibly. The devotion of a servant was, I felt, a thousand times more praiseworthy than that of a wife to her husband because it was entirely unselfish. There was nothing surprising in the wife's devotion to her husband, as there was an indissoluble bond between them. The devotion was perfectly natural. But it required a special effort to cultivate equal devotion between master and servant. The poet's point of view began gradually to grow upon me and to gain ground in my own mind.

What, then, I asked myself, should be my relation to my wife? Did my faithfulness consist in making my wife an instrument of my passion? So long as I was the slave of passion, my faithfulness was worth nothing. To be fair to my wife I must say that she never was the temptress. It was therefore the easiest thing for me to take the vow of Brahmacharya (Chastity), if only I willed it. It was my weak will or lustful attachment that was the obstacle.

Even after my conscience had been roused in the matter I failed twice. I failed, because the motive that actuated the effort was none of the highest. My main object was to escape having more children. Seeing, therefore, that I did not desire more children I began to strive after self-control. There was endless difficulty in the task. I decided to retire to bed only after the day's work had left me completely exhausted. All these efforts did not seem to bear much fruit; but when I look back upon the past I feel that the final resolution was the cumulative effect of these unsuccessful strivings.

The final resolution could only be made as late as 1906.

The Satyagraha campaign had not then been started. I had not the least notion even of its coming. I was practising at the Bar in Johannesburg at the time of the Zulu "Rebellion" in Natal, which came soon after the Boer War. On that occasion I felt that I must offer my services to the Natal Government. The offer was accepted.<sup>1</sup> But the work set me furiously thinking in the direction of self-control, and according to my wont I discussed my thoughts with my co-workers. It became my conviction that to have more children and be responsible for their care and upbringing would be inconsistent with public service. I had to break up my household at Johannesburg in order to be able to serve during the "Rebellion." Within one month of offering my services I had to give up the house which I had so carefully furnished. Then I took my wife and children to Phoenix. After that I led the Indian Ambulance Corps attached to the Natal forces. During the difficult marches that had to be performed in Zululand the idea flashed upon me that if I wanted to devote myself to the service of the community in this manner I must relinquish the desire for children and wealth, and must live the life of a Vanaprastha—of one retired from household cares.

At this time the importance of vows grew upon me more clearly than ever before. I discovered when making my experiments with Truth that a vow, far from closing the door to real freedom, opened it wider. Up to this time I had not met with success because the will had been lacking, because I had no faith in myself and no faith in the grace of God, and therefore my mind had been tossed on the boisterous sea of doubt. I realized

<sup>1</sup> See *Mahatma Gandhi: His Own Story*, p. 142.

that in refusing to take a vow man was drawn into temptation, and that to be bound by a vow was like a passage from libertinism to a real monogamous marriage.

When a man says to himself, "I believe in effort, I do not want to bind myself with vows," it is really the mentality of weakness that makes the excuse. He betrays in those very words a subtle desire for the thing to be avoided. Otherwise, where can be the difficulty in making a final decision? I take a vow to flee from the serpent which I know will bite me; I do not simply make an effort to flee from him. I know that mere effort means ignorance of the certain fact that the serpent is bound to kill me. The fact, therefore, that I could rest content with an effort only means that I have not yet clearly realized the necessity of definite action.

"But supposing my views are changed in the future, how can I bind myself by a vow?" Such a doubt often deters us. But that doubt also betrays a lack of a clear perception, that a particular thing must be renounced. That is why Nishkulanand has sung:

Renunciation without aversion is not lasting.

Where, therefore, the desire is gone, a vow of renunciation is the natural and inevitable fruit.

After full discussion and mature deliberation I took the vow in 1906. I had not shared my thoughts with my wife until then. I only consulted her at the time of taking the vow. She had no objection. But I was hard put to it in making the final resolve. I had not the necessary strength. How was I to control my passions? The elimination of carnal passion seemed then a strange thing. But I launched forth in the sustaining power of God.

As I look back upon the twenty years of the vow, I am filled with happiness and wonderment. The more or less successful practice of self-control had been going on since 1906. But the freedom and joy that came to me after taking the vow had never been experienced until that date. Before the vow had been taken I had been open to temptation at any moment. Now the vow was a sure shield against temptation. The great potentiality of Brahmacharya became daily more and more patent to me. As though unknown to me, the vow had been preparing me for Satyagraha. It has not been a preconceived plan. It came to me spontaneously, without my having willed it. But I could see now that all my previous steps had led on to that goal. I had cut down my heavy household expenses at Johannesburg and gone to Phoenix in order to take, as it were, the Brahmacharya vow.

I did not owe to a study of the Scriptures the knowledge that a perfect observance of my vow meant realization of Brahman.<sup>1</sup> It slowly grew upon me with experience. The scriptural texts on the subject I read only later in life. Every day of the vow has taken me nearer the knowledge that in Brahmacharya lies the protection of the body, the mind and the soul. For it was now no process of hard penance, it was rather a matter of consolation and joy. Every day revealed a fresh beauty in it.

But if it was a matter of ever-increasing joy, let no one believe that it was an easy thing for me. Even now that I have grown old I realize how hard a thing it is. Every

<sup>1</sup> The Hindu name for God in His infinitude. The word Brahmacharya has this divine name as its affix.

day I realize more and more that it is like walking on the sword's edge, and I see every moment the necessity for eternal vigilance.

Control of the palate is the first essential in the observance of this vow. I found that complete control of the palate made the observance very easy, and so I now pursued my dietetic experiments not only from the vegetarians' but also from the Brahmachari's point of view. As the result of these experiments I saw that the food eaten should be limited, simple, spiceless, and, if possible, uncooked.

Six years of experiment have shown me that the Brahmachari's ideal food is fresh fruit and nuts. The immunity from passion that I enjoyed when I lived on this food was unknown to me after I changed that diet. Brahmacharya needed no effort on my part in South Africa when I lived on fruits and nuts alone. It has been a matter of very great effort ever since I began to take milk again. I have not the least doubt that milk diet makes the Brahmacharya vow difficult to observe. Let no one deduce from this that all Brahmacharis must give up milk. The effect of different kinds of food can be determined only after numerous experiments. I have yet to find a substitute for milk which is an equally good muscle-builder and as easily digestible. The doctors, Eastern and Western, have alike failed to enlighten me. Therefore, though I know milk to be partly a stimulant, I cannot for the time being advise anyone to give it up.

As an external aid, fasting is as necessary as selection and restriction in diet. So overpowering are the senses that they are completely hedged in on all sides, from

above and from beneath. It is common knowledge that the senses are powerless without food, and so fasting undertaken with a view to control the senses is no doubt very helpful. With some, fasting is of no avail, because assuming that mechanical fasting alone will make them immune, they keep their bodies without God. But the possibilities of renunciation are unlimited even as there is no limit to those of Brahmacharya. It is impossible of attainment by limited effort. For many, it must remain only as an ideal. An aspirant will always be conscious of his own shortcomings. He will seek out the passions lingering in the innermost recesses of his own heart and will incessantly strive to get rid of them. So long as the inner thoughts are not under complete control of the will, Brahmacharya in all its fullness is absent. Involuntary thought is an affection of the mind. The complete curbing of thought, therefore, means curbing of the mind, which is even more difficult to restrain than the body. Nevertheless, the existence of God within makes even control of the mind possible. For He can do what no human being can perform. Let no one think that it is impossible to control the inner thoughts simply because it is so difficult. It is the highest goal, and it is no wonder that the highest effort should be necessary to attain it.

But in my own case it was only after coming back to India that I realized that such Brahmacharya in the inmost heart was impossible to attain by mere human effort and apart from divine aid. Until then I had been labouring under the delusion that a change to fruit diet alone would enable me to eradicate all passions, and I had flattered myself with the belief that I had nothing more to do than thus to regulate my external life and



its appetites. But I found that mere human effort always failed. Without God's help nothing was lasting.

Meanwhile, let me make it clear that those who desire to observe Brahmacharya with a view to realizing God through inner purity of heart need not despair, provided only their faith in God goes side by side with their confidence in their own effort.

"The sense-objects turn away from an abstemious soul, leaving the relish behind. The relish also disappears with the realization of the Highest."<sup>1</sup> Therefore His name and His grace are the last resources of the aspirant after spiritual freedom. This truth only came to me in full after my return to India and at a much later period in my life.

Fasting and restrictions in diet now began to play a much more important part in my experiments with Truth. Passion in man is generally co-existent with a hankering after the pleasure of the palate. And so it was continually with me. I have encountered many difficulties in trying to control passion as well as taste, and I cannot claim even now that I have brought them under complete control. I have considered myself naturally to be a heavy eater. What friends have thought to be my restraint has never appeared to me in that light. If I had failed to develop restraint I should have descended lower than the beasts and met my doom long ago. However, as I had adequately realized my shortcomings, I made a great effort to get rid of them. Thanks to this daily endeavour, I have managed to pull on with my body all these years and put in with it my share of work.

Being conscious of my own weakness and imper-

<sup>1</sup> *The Bhagavad Gita*, 2-59.

fection, and unexpectedly coming in contact with congenial company, I began to take an exclusive fruit diet or to fast on different suitable occasions. My first effort was with a fruit diet, but from the standpoint of restraint I did not find much to choose between a fruit diet and a diet of food grains. I observed that the same indulgence of taste was possible with the former as with the latter, and even more, when one got accustomed to it. Therefore I came to attach greater importance to fasting or having only one meal a day on holidays. And if there was some occasion for penance I gladly utilized it also for the purpose of fasting.

But I saw, further, that the body being now trained more effectively the food yielded greater relish and the appetite grew keener. It dawned upon me that fasting could be made as powerful a weapon of indulgence as restraint. Many similar later experiences of mine as well as of others can be adduced in evidence of this startling fact. I wanted to improve and train my body; but as my chief object was to achieve restraint and conquest of the palate, I selected first one food and then another, and at the same time restricted the amount. But the relish, as it were, always pursued me. As I gave up one thing and took up another, this latter afforded me a fresher and greater relish than its predecessor.

In making these experiments I had several companions, the chief of whom was Hermann Kallenbach. Mr. Kallenbach was always with me whether in fasting or in dietetic changes. I lived with him at his place when the Satyagraha struggle was at its height. We discussed our changes of food and derived more pleasure from the new diet than from the old. Conversation about food

of this nature sounded more pleasant in those days, and did not strike me as at all improper. Experience has taught me, however, that it was wrong to have dwelt upon the relish of food. We should eat not in order to please the palate but just to keep the body going. When each organ of sense subserves the body and through the body the soul, the special relish disappears and then alone does it begin to function in the way nature intended it to do.

Any number of experiments is too small and no sacrifice is too great for attaining this symphony with nature. But unfortunately the current in these days is flowing strongly in the opposite direction. We are not ashamed to sacrifice a multitude of other lives in order merely to decorate the perishable body. We try also to prolong its existence for a few fleeting moments, with the result that we kill ourselves, body and soul. In trying to cure one old disease we give rise to a hundred new ones. In seeking to enjoy the pleasures of sense we lose in the end even our capacity for enjoyment. All this is going on before our eyes, but there are none so blind as those who will not see.

Just about this time when I gave up milk and cereals, and started on the experiment of the fruit diet, I commenced fasting as a means of self-restraint. In this Kallenbach also joined me. I had been used to fasting now and again, but for purely health reasons. It was from a friend that I learnt that fasting was necessary for self-restraint. Having been born in a Vaishnava family and of a mother who was given to keeping all sorts of hard vows, I had observed while in India the Ekadashi<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A fast on the eleventh day practised specially by widows in Hindu India.

and other fasts, but in doing so I had merely copied my mother and sought to please my parents.

At that time I did not understand, nor did I believe in the efficacy of fasting. But seeing that the friend I have mentioned was observing a fast with benefit, I followed his example and began keeping the Ekadashi fast. As a rule Hindus allow themselves milk and fruit on a day of fasting, but such a fast I had been keeping already. So now I began a complete fast, allowing myself only water.

When I entered on this experiment the Hindu month of Shravan and the Muhammadan month of Ramazan happened to coincide. The Gandhis used to observe not only the Vaishnava<sup>1</sup> but also the Shaivite vows, and visited the Vaishnava as also the Shaivite temples. Some of the members of the family used to observe the pradosha<sup>2</sup> in the whole of the month of Shravan. I decided to do likewise.

These important experiments were undertaken at a later date while we were at Tolstoy Farm, where Kallenbach and I were staying with a few of the Satyagrahi families, including young people and children. Among them were four or five Musalmans. I always helped and encouraged them in keeping all their religious observances. I took care to see that they offered their daily prayers. There were Christians and Parsis too, whom I considered it my duty to encourage to follow their respective religious observances.

During the month of Ramazan,<sup>3</sup> therefore, I persuaded

<sup>1</sup> Vishnu is the name for the Supreme God among one section of Hindus; Shiva is the name for the Supreme God among another section. The former are called Vaishnavas, the latter are called Shaivites.

<sup>2</sup> Fasting until the evening.

<sup>3</sup> During the month of Ramazan, orthodox Musalmans only take food and water before sunrise and after sunset.

the Musalman youngsters to observe the fast. I had, of course, decided to observe the pradosha myself, but I now asked the Hindu, Parsi and Christian youngsters to join me. I explained to them that it was always a good thing to participate with others in any matter of self-denial. Many of the Farm inmates welcomed my proposal. The Hindu and the Parsi youngsters did not copy the Musalmans in every detail; it was not necessary. The Musalmans had to wait for their breakfast until sunset, whereas the others did not do so, and were thus able to prepare delicacies for the Musalman friends and serve them. Nor had the Hindu and other youngsters to keep the Musalmans company when they had their last meal before sunrise the next morning, and of course all except the Musalmans allowed themselves water.

The result was that everyone was convinced of the value of fasting, and a splendid loyalty to one another grew up among them.

We were all vegetarians on that occasion, thanks, I must gratefully confess, to the readiness of all to respect my feelings. The Musalman youngsters must have missed their meat during the Ramazan month, but none of them ever let me know that they did so. They took delight in the relish of a vegetarian diet, and the Hindu youngsters often prepared vegetarian delicacies for them, in keeping with the simplicity of the Farm.

Thus the atmosphere of self-restraint naturally sprang up amongst us. All the inmates now began to join us in keeping partial and complete fasts, which I am sure was entirely to the good. I cannot definitely say how far this self-denial touched their hearts and helped them in their striving to conquer the flesh. For my part, however,

I am convinced that I greatly benefited by it both physically and morally. Yet I know that it does not necessarily follow that fasting and similar discipline would have the same effect on all.

Fasting can help to curb animal passion only if it is undertaken with a view to self-restraint. Some of my friends have actually found their animal passions and palate stimulated as an after-effect of fasts. That is to say, fasting is futile unless it is accompanied by an incessant longing for self-restraint. The famous verse from the second chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is worth noting in this connection:

For a man who is fasting his senses outwardly, the sense-objects disappear, leaving the yearning behind; but when he has seen the Highest, even the yearning disappears.

Fasting is therefore one of the means to attain the end of self-restraint, but it is not all; and if physical fasting is not accompanied by mental fasting, it is bound to end in hypocrisy and consequent disaster.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE PROFESSION OF LAW

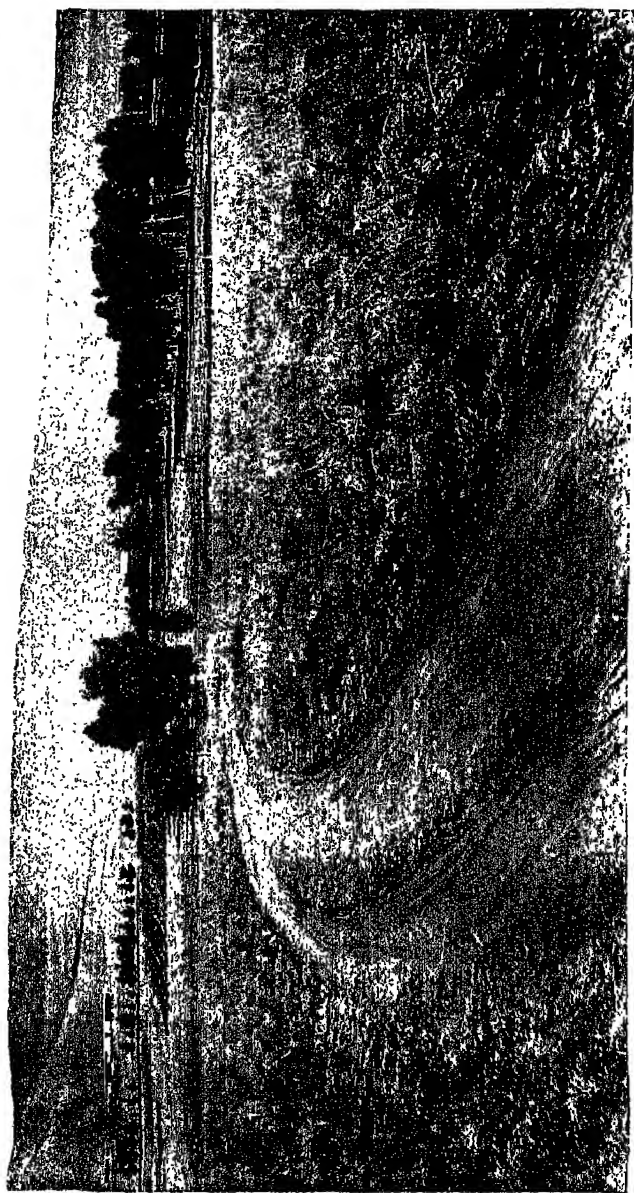
AS A STUDENT I had heard that the lawyer's profession made lying a necessity. But this did not deter me or influence me against it; for I had no intention of earning either position or money by lying.

My principle of honesty was put to the test many times over in South Africa. Often I would know that my opponents had tutored their witnesses, and if only I encouraged my client or his witness to lie, we should certainly win the case. But I always resisted the temptation. I remember only one occasion when, after having won a case, I suspected that my client had deceived me. In my heart of hearts I only wished that I should win if my client's case was right and just. In fixing my fees I do not recall ever having made them conditional on my winning the case. Whether my client won or lost I expected nothing more or less than my fee.

I warned every new client at the outset that he should not expect me to take up a false case or to coach the witnesses, with the result that I built up such a reputation that no false cases used to come to me; and indeed some of my clients would keep their clean cases for me and take the doubtful ones elsewhere.

There was one law-suit which proved a severe trial to me. It was brought to me by one of my best clients. It was a case of highly complicated accounts and had been a prolonged one.

It had been heard in parts before several Courts. Ulti-



TOLSTOY FARM





mately the book-keeping portion of it was entrusted by the Court to the arbitration of some qualified accountants. The award was entirely in favour of my client, but the arbitrators had inadvertently committed an error in calculation which, however small, was serious, inasmuch as an entry that ought to have been made on the debit side was put down to the credit side. The opponents had opposed the award on other grounds. I was acting as junior counsel for my client. When the senior counsel became aware of the error in the calculation he was of opinion that our client was not bound to admit it. No counsel, he thought, was bound to admit anything that went against his client's interests. I said we ought to admit the error.

"In that case," the senior counsel contended, "there is every likelihood of the court cancelling the whole award; and no sane counsel would imperil his client's case to that extent. At any rate, I personally would be the last man to take any such risk. If the case were to be sent up for a fresh hearing, one could never tell what expenses might have to be incurred and what the ultimate result might be."

The client himself was present when this conversation took place.

"Personally," I said, "I feel that both we and our client ought to run the risk. Where is the certainty of the Court upholding a wrong award, simply because we do not admit an error? And supposing the admission were to bring the client to grief, what harm is there?"

"But why should we make the admission at all?" asked the senior counsel.

"Where is the certainty," I replied, "that the Court

will not detect the error, or that our opponent will not discover it?"

"Well, then, you had better argue the case," replied the senior counsel. "I am not prepared to be responsible for it on your terms."

"If you will not take it up," I replied humbly, "then I am prepared to do so, if our client so desires. But I shall have nothing to do with the case if the error is not admitted."

With this I looked at my client. He was a little embarrassed. I had been engaged in the case from the very first. The client fully trusted me, and knew me through and through. "Very well," he said at last. "You will argue the case and admit the error. We shall lose, if that is to be our lot. May God defend the right."

I was delighted. I had expected nothing less from him. The senior counsel again warned me and pitied me for my obduracy, but congratulated me all the same.

I had no doubt about the soundness of my advice, but I doubted very much my fitness for doing full justice to the case. I felt it would be a most hazardous undertaking to argue such a difficult case before the Supreme Court, and therefore when I appeared before the Bench I was in fear and trembling.

As soon as I referred personally to the error in the accounts, one of the judges said:

"Is not this sharp practice, Mr. Gandhi?"

I boiled within to hear this charge. It was intolerable to be accused of sharp practice when there was not the slightest warrant for it.

"With the judge prejudiced from the start like this,"

I said to myself, "there is little chance of success." But I composed my thoughts.

"I am surprised," I answered, "that your Lordship should suspect sharp practice without hearing me out."

"I make no charge against you," said the judge. "It is a mere suggestion."

"The suggestion," I replied, "seems to me to amount to a charge. I would ask your Lordship to hear me out, and then arraign me if there is any occasion for it."

"I am sorry to have interrupted you," replied the judge. "Pray do go on with your explanation of the discrepancy."

I had enough material in support of my explanation. Thanks to the judge having raised this question, I was able to rivet the Court's attention on my argument from the very start. I felt much encouraged and took the opportunity of entering into a long detailed explanation. The Court gave me a patient hearing and I was able to convince the judges that the discrepancy was due entirely to inadvertence. They therefore did not feel disposed to cancel the whole award.

The opposing counsel seemed to feel secure in the belief that not much argument on his side would be needed after the error had been admitted. But the judges continued to interrupt him, as they were convinced that the error was a slip which could be easily rectified. The counsel laboured hard to attack the award; but the judge, who had originally started with the suspicion, had now come round definitely to my side.

"Supposing Mr. Gandhi had not admitted the error," he asked, "what would you have done?"

"It was impossible," the counsel replied, "for us to

secure the services of a more competent and honest expert accountant than the one appointed by us."

"The Court must presume," said the judge, "that you know your case best. If you cannot point out anything beyond the slip, which any expert accountant is liable to commit, the Court will be loath to compel the parties to go in for fresh litigation and fresh expenses because of a patent mistake. We may not order a fresh hearing when such an error can be easily corrected."

And so the counsel's objection was overruled. The Court either confirmed the award, with the error rectified, or else ordered the arbitrator to rectify the error.

I was delighted. So were my client and senior counsel; and I was confirmed in my conviction that it was not impossible to practise law without compromising truth. Let the reader, however, remember that even truthfulness in the practice of the profession cannot cure it of the fundamental defect that vitiates it.

On one occasion while I was conducting a case before a magistrate in Johannesburg I discovered that my client had deceived me. I saw him completely break down in the witness-box. So without argument I asked the magistrate to dismiss the case. The opposing counsel was astonished and the magistrate was pleased. I rebuked the client for bringing a false case to me. He knew that I never accepted false cases, and when I brought the thing home to his conscience he admitted his mistake; and I have an impression that he was not angry with me for having asked the magistrate to decide against him. At any rate, my conduct in this case did not affect my practice for the worse; indeed, it made my work easier. I also saw that my devotion to truth enhanced my repu-

tation amongst the members of the profession. In spite of the handicap of colour, I was able in some cases to win even their affection.

During my professional work it was also my habit never to disguise my ignorance from my clients or my colleagues. Wherever I felt myself at sea I would advise my client to consult some other counsel, or, if he preferred to stick to me, I would ask him to let me seek the assistance of a senior counsel. This frankness earned me the unbounded affection and trust of my clients. They were always willing to pay the fee whenever consultation with senior counsel was necessary. This affection and trust served me in good stead in my public work.

I have indicated in the foregoing chapters that my object in practising in South Africa was the service of the community. Even for this purpose winning the confidence of the people was an indispensable condition. The large-hearted Indians magnified into service professional work done for money, and when I advised them to suffer the hardships of imprisonment for the sake of their rights, many of them cheerfully accepted the advice, not so much because they had reasoned out the correctness of the course, as because of their confidence in and affection for me.

As I write this, many happy reminiscences come to my mind. Hundreds of clients became friends and real co-workers in public service, and their association sweetened a life that was otherwise full of difficulties and dangers.

Parsi Rustomji was one who became at once my client and co-worker. I won his confidence to such an extent that he sought and followed my advice also in private and domestic matters. Even when he was ill he would

seek my aid, and though there was much difference between our ways of living he did not hesitate to accept my medical treatment.

This friend once got into a very bad scrape. Though he kept me informed of most of his affairs, he had studiously kept back one thing. He was a large importer of goods from Bombay and Calcutta and it turned out that not infrequently he resorted to smuggling. But as he was on the best of terms with the Customs officials no one was inclined to suspect him. In charging duty they used to take his invoice on trust. Some may even have connived at the smuggling.

But to use the telling simile of the Gujarati poet Akho, theft, like quicksilver, won't be suppressed, and Parsi Rustomji proved no exception. The good friend ran post-haste to me, the tears rolling down his cheeks as he said: "Bhai, I have deceived you. My guilt has been discovered to-day. I have smuggled and I am doomed. I must go to jail and be ruined. You alone can save me from this predicament. I have kept back nothing else from you, but I had thought I ought not to bother you with such tricks of the trade, and so I had never told you about this smuggling. But now, how deeply I repent it!"

I calmed him and said: "To save or not to save you is in His hands. As for me, you know my way; I can but try to save you by means of a confession."

The good Parsi felt deeply mortified.

"But is not my confession before you enough?" he asked.

"You have wronged not me but the Government. How will the confession made before me avail you?" I replied gently.

"Of course I will do just as you advise, but will you

not consult with my old counsel, Mr. A——? He is a friend too," said Parsi Rustomji.

Enquiry revealed that the smuggling had been going on for a long time, but the actual offence detected involved a trifling sum. We went to his counsel. He perused the papers, and said: "The case will be tried by a jury, and a Natal jury will be the last to acquit an Indian. But I will not give up hope."

I did not know this counsel intimately. Parsi Rustomji intercepted—"I thank you," he said, "but I should like to be guided by Mr. Gandhi's advice in this case. He knows me intimately. Of course you will advise me whenever necessary."

Having thus shelved the counsel's question, we went to Parsi Rustomji's shop.

And now explaining my view, I said to him: "I don't think this case should be taken to court at all. It rests with the Customs Officer to prosecute you or to let you go, and he in turn will have to be guided by the Attorney-General. I am prepared to meet both. I propose that you should offer to pay the penalty they fix, and the odds are that they will be agreeable. But if they are not, you must be prepared to go to jail. I am of opinion that the shame lies not so much in going to jail as in committing the offence. The deed of shame has already been done. Imprisonment you should regard as a penance. The real penance lies in resolving never to smuggle again."

I cannot say that Parsi Rustomji took all this quite well. He was a brave man, but his courage failed him for the moment. His name and fame were at stake, and where would he be if the edifice he had reared with such care and labour should go to pieces?



"Well, I have told you," he said, "that I am entirely in your hands. You may do just as you like."

I brought to bear on this case all my powers of persuasion. I met the Customs Officer and fearlessly apprised him of the whole affair. I also promised to place all the books at his disposal and told him how penitent Parsi Rustomji was feeling. The Customs Officer said: "I like the old Parsi. I am sorry he has made a fool of himself. You know where my duty lies. I must be guided by the Attorney-General and so I would advise you to use all your persuasion with him."

"I should be thankful," said I, "if you do not insist on dragging him into court."

Having got him to promise this, I entered into correspondence with the Attorney-General, whom I also met. I am glad to say that he appreciated my complete frankness and was convinced that I had kept back nothing.

I now forget whether it was in connexion with this or with some other case that my persistence and frankness extorted from him this remark: "I see you will never take 'no' for an answer."

The case against Parsi Rustomji was compromised. He was to pay a penalty equal to twice the amount he had confessed to having smuggled. Rustomji reduced to writing the facts of the whole case, got the paper framed and hung it up in his office to serve as a perpetual reminder to his heirs and fellow merchants.

These friends of Rustomji warned me not to be taken in by this transitory contrition. When I told Rustomji about this warning he said: "What would be my fate if I deceived you?"

Johannesburg was the stronghold of the Asiatic

Department. I had been observing that far from protecting the Indians, Chinese and others, these officers of the Department were grinding them down. Every day I had complaints like this: "The rightful ones are not admitted, while those who have no right are smuggled in on payment of £100. If you will not remedy this state of things, who will?"

I shared the feeling. If I did not succeed in stamping out this evil, I should be living in the Transvaal in vain. So I began to collect evidence, and as soon as I had gathered a fair amount I approached the Police Commissioner. He appeared to be a just man. Far from giving me the cold shoulder, he listened to me patiently and asked me to show him all the evidence in my possession. He examined the witnesses himself and was satisfied, but he knew as well as I that it was difficult in South Africa to get a white jury to convict a white offender against a coloured man.

"But," said he, "let us at any rate try. It is not proper, either, to let these criminals go scot-free, for fear of the jury acquitting them. I must get them arrested. I assure you that I shall not leave a stone unturned."

I did not need the assurance. I suspected quite a number of officers, but as I had no unchallengeable evidence against them all, warrants of arrest were issued against the two about whose guilt I had not the slightest doubt.

My movements could never be kept secret. Many knew that I was going to the Police Commissioner practically daily. The two officers, against whom warrants had been issued, had spies—more or less efficient. They used to patrol my office and report my movements to the officers. I must admit, however, that these officers were

so bad that they could not have had many spies. Had the Indians and Chinese not helped me, they would never have been arrested.

One of them absconded. The Police Commissioner obtained an extradition warrant against him and got him arrested and brought to the Transvaal. They were tried, and although there was strong evidence against them, and in spite of the fact that the jury had evidence of one of them having absconded, both were declared not guilty and acquitted.

I was sorely disappointed. The Police Commissioner was also very sorry. I got disgusted with the legal profession. The very intellect became an abomination to me, inasmuch as it could be prostituted for screening crimes.

However, the guilt of both these officers was so patent that in spite of their acquittal the Government could not harbour them. Both were cashiered and the Asiatic Department became comparatively clean, and the Indian community was somewhat reassured.

The event enhanced my prestige and brought me more business. The bulk, though not all, of the hundreds of pounds that the community was monthly squandering in speculation was saved. All could not be saved, for the dishonest still plied their trade. But it was now possible for an honest man to preserve his honesty.

Though these officers were so bad, I had nothing against them personally. They were aware of this themselves, and when in their straits they approached me, I helped them too. They had a chance of getting employment by the Johannesburg Municipality in case I did not oppose the proposal. A friend of theirs saw me in

this connexion and I agreed not to thwart them, and they succeeded.

This attitude of mine put the officials with whom I came in contact perfectly at ease, and though I had often to fight with their department and use strong language, they remained quite friendly with me. I was not then quite conscious that such behaviour was a part of my nature. I learnt that it was an essential part of Satyagraha, and an attribute of Ahimsa.

Man and his deed are two distinct things. Whereas a good deed should call forth approbation and a wicked deed disapprobation, the doer of the deed, whether good or wicked, always deserves respect or pity as the case may be. "Hate the sin and not the sinner" is a precept which, though easy enough to understand, is rarely practised, and that is why the poison of hatred spreads over the world.

This love is the basis of the search for Truth. That is why Ahimsa and Satya always go together. I am realizing every day that the search for truth is vain unless it is founded on Love. It is quite proper to resist and attack a system, but to resist and attack its author is tantamount to resisting and attacking oneself. For we are all subject to the same weakness and are children of one and the same Father; and as such the divine powers within us are infinite. To injure a single human being is to injure those divine powers within us, and thus the harm reaches not only that one human being, but with him the whole world.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE REGISTRATION ORDINANCE

BITTER EXPERIENCE OF the corruptness of the Asiatic Department was reaching me every day in Johannesburg. The best efforts of the Transvaal British Indian Association were directed to finding a remedy for this disease. The repeal of Act 3 of 1885 now receded into the background as a distant objective. The immediate aim was limited to saving ourselves from the onrushing flood of this Asiatic Department. Indian deputations waited on Lord Milner, Lord Selborne, Sir Arthur Lawley and also on officers of lesser dignity. I used often to see Government officers. We obtained some slight relief here and there, but it was all patch-work, pure and simple. We used only to receive such satisfaction as is experienced by a man who has been deprived of everything by robbers and then induces them by entreaty to return something of very small value.

It was in consequence of our own agitation that the officers, whose dismissal I have already referred to, were prosecuted. Our misgivings as regards the restrictions on Indian immigration proved correct. Permits were no longer required from Europeans, while they continued to be demanded from Indians. The late Boer Government never strictly enforced their drastic anti-Asiatic legislation, not because they were generous, but because their administration was lax.

The British Constitution is old and stereotyped, and officers under it have to work like machines. Their

liberty of action is restricted by a system of progressive checks. Under the British Constitution, therefore, if the policy of the Government is liberal, the subject receives the utmost advantage of its liberality. On the other hand, if their policy is oppressive and niggardly, the subjects feel the maximum weight of their heavy hand.

The reverse is the case under constitutions such as that of the late Boer Republic. Whether or not the subjects reap full advantage from the liberal laws largely depends upon the officers who are in charge of its administration. Thus, when British power was established in the Transvaal, all laws adversely affecting the Indians began to be more strictly enforced. Loopholes, wherever they existed, were carefully closed. The Asiatic Department was bound to be harsh in its operations. The repeal of the old laws was therefore out of the question. It only remained for the Indians to see how their rigours might be mitigated in practice.

Soon after the establishment of British rule in the Transvaal and the Free State, Lord Milner appointed a Committee whose terms of reference were to prepare a list of those old laws of both the Republics which placed restrictions on the liberty of the subject or were opposed to the spirit of the British Constitution. The anti-Indian laws could clearly have been included in this description. But Lord Milner's object in appointing the Committee was not to redress the grievances of the Indians but those of the British. The Committee submitted their report in a very short time, and many acts, large and small, which already affected the British were repealed merely by a stroke of the pen.

The same Committee prepared a list of anti-Indian

Acts. These were published in the form of a book which served as a handy manual for the Asiatic Department.

Now, if the anti-Indian laws had not mentioned the Indians by name and had not thus been made expressly applicable to them alone, the object of the legislators might have been achieved; and yet the laws would have remained general laws instead of racial laws. None would have felt insulted by their enactment; and when the existing bitterness was softened by time, there would have been no need to modify the laws, but simply to exercise a more liberal administration of them.

To take one instance from the laws which already were in force. The first disfranchising Act which was enacted in Natal, but was subsequently disallowed by the Imperial Government, provided for the disqualification as voters of all Asiatics as such. Now if the laws were to be altered, public opinion would have to be so far educated that the majority would be not only not hostile but actually friendly to Asiatics. The colour bar, if set up, could only be removed when feelings of cordiality were established between the races. This is an illustration of racial or class legislation.

The Act referred to was withdrawn and a second Act enacted in its place which nearly achieved an identical object yet was of a general nature, the sting of racial distinction being removed. The substance of one of its clauses stated that no person could be placed on the voters' roll in Natal who belonged to a country which had not hitherto possessed elective and representative institutions based on the parliamentary franchise. No reference was made here to Indians or Asiatics. The opinions of counsel could differ as to whether India

possessed representative institutions based on the parliamentary franchise or not. But assuming for the sake of argument that India did not, in 1894, enjoy the parliamentary franchise, no one could say off-hand that the officer in charge of voters' lists in Natal had done an illegal thing if he included the names of Indians in the lists.

There is always a general presumption in favour of the rights of the subject. So long, therefore, as the government of the day does not become positively hostile, the names of Indians and others could be included in the electoral roll, the above law notwithstanding. Then, if the dislike for Indians became less marked and if the local Government was unwilling to injure the Indians, their names could be entered in the voters' lists without any modification of the law.

This is the advantage of a general law. The wise policy, therefore, would be to enact as little class legislation as possible, and it would be wiser still to avoid it altogether. Once a law is enacted, many difficulties must be encountered before it can be reversed. It is only when public opinion is highly educated that the laws in force in a country can be repealed. A constitution under which laws are continually being modified or repealed cannot be said to be stable or well organized.

We can now better appreciate the poison which was present in anti-Asiatic laws in the Transvaal. They were not general laws at all but racial in character. The Asiatics as such could not vote; nor could they own land outside the locations set apart for them by the Government. The administrators could do nothing for the Indians so long as these laws remained on the statute-book. Lord Milner's



Committee could make a list of such laws only as were not general in character. Had they been general laws, not expressly directed against Asiatics, they might have been repealed along with the rest. The officers in charge could never have argued their helplessness and said that they had no alternative but to enforce the law.

The local officials clearly observed that the anti-Asiatic laws enacted by the late Boer Government were neither adequately severe nor systematic. If the Indians could enter the Transvaal at will and carry on trade wherever they chose, then British traders would suffer. This argument carried great weight with the Europeans and their representatives in the Ministry. They were all out to amass the maximum of wealth in the minimum of time; how could they endure the Indians becoming co-sharers with them? Hypocrisy pressed political theory into service in order to make out a plausible case. A bare-faced selfish or mercantile argument would not satisfy the intelligent Europeans of South Africa. The human intellect delights in inventing specious arguments in order to support injustice, and the South African Europeans were no exception to this general rule.

The arguments used by General Smuts and others deserve special notice. They would lay stress on the fact that South Africa was a representative of Western civilization while India was a centre of Oriental culture. Thinkers of the present generation hold that these two civilizations cannot go together. If nations representing these rival cultures met even in small groups, the result would only be an explosion. The West has become opposed to simplicity while the East considers this virtue to be of primary importance. How can these opposite

views be reconciled? It is not the business of statesmen who are practical men to adjudicate upon the relative merits of each. Western civilization may or may not be good, but Westerners wish to stick to it. They have made tireless endeavours to save that civilization. They have shed rivers of blood for its sake. They have suffered great hardships on its behalf. It was therefore too late for them now to chalk out a new path for themselves.

Thus considered, the Indian question could hardly be resolved into one of trade jealousy or race hatred, as if these were the only factors. The problem was rather one of preserving one's own civilization, that is, of enjoying the supreme right of self-preservation and discharging the corresponding duty. Some public speakers might like to inflame the Europeans by finding fault with the Indians, but political thinkers believed that the very qualities of Indians count for defects in South Africa. The Indians were disliked in South Africa for their simplicity, patience, perseverance, frugality and other-worldliness. Westerners were enterprising, impatient, engrossed in multiplying their material wants and in satisfying them, fond of good cheer, anxious to save physical labour and prodigal in their habits. They were therefore afraid that if thousands of Orientals settled in South Africa, the Westerners would have to go to the wall. They were not prepared to commit suicide, and their leaders would never permit them to be reduced to such straits.

I believe I have impartially recapitulated the arguments urged by men of the highest character among Europeans. I have characterized their arguments as pseudo-philosophic, but I do not thereby wish to suggest

that they are groundless. From the standpoint of immediate self-interest they have much force. But from the philosophical point of view they tend to hypocrisy. In my humble opinion, no impartial person could accept such conclusions and no reformer would place his civilization in such a position of helplessness. So far as I am aware no Eastern thinkers fear that if Western nations came into free contact with the East, the culture of the East would be swept away like sand by the onrushing tide of Western civilization. So far as I have a grasp of Eastern thought it seems to me that its civilization not only does not fear but would positively welcome free contact with the West. If contrary instances can be met with in the East, they do not affect the principle I have laid down; for a number of illustrations can be cited in its support.

However that may be, Western thinkers claim that the foundation of their civilization is the predominance of might over right. Therefore the protagonists of that civilization devote most of their time to the conservation of brute force. These thinkers likewise assert that the nations which do not increase their material wants are doomed to destruction. It is in pursuance of these principles that Western nations have settled in South Africa and subdued the numerically overwhelmingly superior races of South Africa. It is absurd to imagine that they would fear the harmless population of India. The best proof of the statement that the Europeans have nothing to fear from Asiatics is provided by the fact that if the Indians had continued to work in South Africa for all time as mere labourers, no agitation would have been started against the Indian immigration.

The only remaining factors are trade and colour.

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Thousands of Europeans have admitted that trade by Indians hits retail European trade hard, and that dislike of them has at present become part and parcel of the mentality of Europeans. Even in the United States of America, where the principle of statutory equality has been established, a man like Booker T. Washington, who is a Christian of high character and has fully assimilated Western civilization, was not considered fit for admission to the court of President Roosevelt, and probably would not be so considered even to-day. The negroes of the United States have accepted Western civilization. They have embraced Christianity. But the black pigment of their skins constitutes their crime, and while in the Northern States they are socially despised, they are lynched in the Southern States on the suspicion of wrongdoing.

This seems to point to the fact that there is not substance in the "philosophical" arguments. But all those who urge them do not necessarily do so in a hypocritical spirit. Many of them honestly hold these views to be sound. It is possible that if we were placed in their position, we too might advance similar arguments. We have a saying in India that as is a man's conduct, such is his understanding. Our arguments are but a reflection of our mentality. If they do not commend themselves to others, we become dissatisfied, impatient and even indignant.

I have deliberately discussed this question with much minuteness, because I wish the different points of view to be understood. Magnanimity and patience are essential to the understanding of Satyagraha and, above all, to the practice of that principle. My object in writing is to show

clearly how Satyagraha, for which I live and for which I believe I am equally prepared to die, originated and how it was practised on a large scale.

Thus the British administrators had decided to prevent fresh Indian immigrants from entering the Transvaal, and to render the position of the old Indian settlers so uncomfortable that they would feel compelled to leave the country in sheer disgust, and even if they did not leave it, they would be reduced to a state bordering on serfdom. Some men, looked upon as great statesmen in South Africa, had declared more than once that they could afford to keep the Indians only as hewers of wood and drawers of water. On the staff of the Asiatic Department was Mr. Lionel Curtis, who has since become known to fame as an ambassador for Dyarchy in India. He enjoyed the confidence of Lord Milner and claimed to do everything according to scientific methods; but he was capable of committing serious blunders. He suggested that if fresh Indian immigration was to be stopped, the first step to be taken was the effective registration of the old Indian residents. That done, no one could smuggle himself into the country by practising evasion, and if any one did, he could be easily detected.

The permits, which were issued to Indians after the establishment of British rule in the Transvaal, contained the signature of the holder, or his thumb impression if he was illiterate. Later on some one suggested the inclusion of a photograph of the holder, and this suggestion was carried out by administrative action, legislation being unnecessary. The Indian leaders, therefore, did not come to know of this innovation at once. When, in course of time, these novel features came to their notice, they sent

memorials to the authorities, and waited upon them in deputations on behalf of the community. The officials' argument was that Government could not permit Indians to enter the country without regulation of some sort, and that therefore all Indians should provide themselves with uniform permits containing such details as might render it impossible for any one but the rightful holders to enter the country. It was my opinion that although we were not bound by law to take out such permits, the Government could insist on requiring them so long as the Peace Preservation Ordinance in South Africa was in force. But just as the Defence of India Act was kept on the Statute Book in India longer than necessary in order to harass the people, so was this Ordinance allowed to remain in force long after the necessity for it had passed. As for the Europeans, it was as a dead letter for all practical purposes. Now if permits must be taken out they should contain some mark of identification. There was nothing wrong, therefore, that those who were illiterate should allow their thumb impressions to be taken. I did not at all like the inclusion of photographs in the permits. Musalmans have religious objections to such a course.

The final upshot of the negotiations between the Indians and the authorities was that the Indian community consented to change their permits and agreed that fresh Indian immigrants should take out permits in the new form. Although the Indians were not bound in law, they voluntarily agreed to re-register so that it might be clear to all concerned that the Indians did not wish to bring in fresh immigrants by unfair means, and the Peace Preservation Ordinance might no longer be used

to harass newcomers. Almost all Indians thus changed their old permits for new ones.

This was no small thing. Like one man, the community completed with the greatest promptitude this re-registration, which they were legally bound to carry out. This was a proof of their sincerity, large-mindedness, common-sense and humility. It also showed that the community had no desire to violate in any way any law in force in the Transvaal. The Indians believed that if they behaved towards the Government with such courtesy, it would treat them well.

The year 1906 was advancing when this re-registration was completed. I had re-entered the Transvaal in 1903 and opened my office in Johannesburg about the middle of that year. Two years had thus passed in merely resisting the inroads of the Asiatic Department. We all expected now that re-registration would satisfy the Government, and confidently looked forward to a period of comparative peace for the community.

But this was not to be. Mr. Lionel Curtis held that the Europeans had not attained their object merely because the Indians had changed their old permits for new certificates of registration. It was not enough in his eyes that great good had been achieved by mutual understanding. He was of opinion that these certificates should have the force of law behind them, and that thus only could the principles underlying them be secured. He would not carry Indian opinion with him, but would frighten us into submission to external restrictions backed up by rigorous legal sanctions.

He therefore drafted an Asiatic Bill and advised the Government that until his Bill was passed, there was no

provision in the laws already in force to prevent the Indians from secretly entering the Transvaal. Mr. Curtis's argument met with a ready response from the Government, and a draft Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance was published in the Transvaal Government Gazette.

Before dealing with this Ordinance in detail, it would be well to dispose of an important event in a few words. As I was the author of the Satyagraha movement, it is necessary to enable the reader fully to understand some events of my life. The Zulu "rebellion" broke out in Natal just while attempts were thus being made to impose further disabilities upon the Indians in the Transvaal. I doubted then, and doubt even now, if the outbreak could be described as a rebellion, but it had always been thus described in Natal. Now, as in the Boer War, many Europeans resident in Natal joined the army as volunteers. As I too was considered resident in Natal, I thought I must do what I could. With the Community's permission, therefore, I made an offer to the Government to raise a Stretcher-bearer Corps for service with the troops. The offer was accepted. I therefore broke up my Johannesburg home and sent my family to Phoenix in Natal, where my co-workers had settled and from where *Indian Opinion* was published. I did not close the office, as I knew that I should not be away long.

I joined the army with a small corps of twenty-five men. Most of the provinces of India were represented even on this small body of men. The Corps was on active service for a month.

I have always been thankful to God for the work which then fell to our lot. We found that the wounded Zulus would have been left uncared for unless we had attended



them. No Europeans would help to dress their wounds. Dr. Savage, who was in charge of the ambulance, was himself a very humane person. It was no part of our duty to nurse the wounded after we had taken them to the hospital. But we had joined the war with a desire to do all we could, no matter whether it did or did not fall within the scope of our work. The good Doctor told us that he could not induce any of the Europeans to nurse the Zulus, that it was beyond him to compel them. He would therefore feel obliged if we undertook this mission of mercy. We were only too glad to do this. We had to cleanse the wounds of several Zulus which had not been attended to for as many as five or six days and were therefore stinking horribly.

We liked the work. The Zulus could not talk to us, but from their gestures and the expression in their eyes they seemed to feel as if God had sent us to their succour. The work for which we had enlisted was also fairly heavy; for sometimes during the month we had to perform a march of as many as forty miles a day.

The Corps was disbanded in a month. Its work was mentioned in dispatches. Each member of the Corps was awarded a medal especially struck for the occasion. The Government wrote a letter of thanks. The three sergeants of the Corps were Gujaratis, Messrs. Shelat, Medh and Joshi. All three had a fine physique and worked very hard. I cannot just now recall the names of the other Indians, but I well remember that one of these was a Pathan, who used to express his astonishment on finding us carrying as large a load as himself.

While I was working with the Corps, two ideas which had long been floating in my mind became firmly fixed.

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First, an aspirant after a life exclusively devoted to service must lead a life of celibacy. Secondly, he must accept poverty as a constant companion through life. He may not take up any occupation which would prevent him or make him shrink from undertaking the lowliest duties or the largest risks.

Letters and telegrams, asking me to proceed to the Transvaal at once, had poured in, even while I was serving with the Corps. On return from the war, therefore, I just met the friends at Phoenix and then at once went to Johannesburg.

There I read the draft Ordinance referred to above. The Transvaal Government Gazette Extraordinary of August 22, 1906, in which the Ordinance was published, was waiting for me in the office. I went up the hill near the house with a friend and began to translate the draft Ordinance into Gujarati for *Indian Opinion*. As I read the sections one after another I was first alarmed and then horror-stricken. I saw nothing in it except hatred of Indians. It seemed to me that if the Ordinance was passed and Indians meekly accepted it, this would spell absolute ruin for the Indians in South Africa. I clearly saw that this was a question of life and death to them. Even should memorials and representatives prove fruitless, the community must not sit with folded hands. It was better to die than submit to such a law.

But how were we to die? What should we dare to do so that there would be nothing before us except a choice of victory or death? An impenetrable wall was before me and I could not see my way through.

Here is a brief summary of the measure. Every Indian, man, woman, or child of eight years or upwards, entitled

to reside in the Transvaal must register his or her name with the Registrar of Asiatics and take out a certificate of registration. The applicants for registration must surrender their old permits to the Registrar, and state in their application their name, residence, caste, age, etc. The Registrar was to note down important marks of identification upon the applicant's person, and take his finger and thumb impressions. Every Indian who failed thus to apply for registration before a certain day was to forfeit his right of residence in the Transvaal. Failure to apply could be held to be an offence in law for which the defaulter could be fined, sent to prison or even deported, within the discretion of the Court. Parents must apply on behalf of minor children and bring them to the Registrar in order to give their finger impressions. In case of parents failing to discharge this responsibility laid upon them, the minor children on attaining the age of sixteen years must discharge it themselves, and if they defaulted they made themselves liable to the same punishment that could be awarded their parents. The certificate of registration issued to an applicant must be produced before any police officer whenever he might be required to do so. Failure in this respect would be held to be an offence for which the defaulter could be fined or sent to prison. Even a person walking on public thoroughfares could be required to produce his certificate. Police officers could enter private houses in order to inspect certificates. Indians entering the Transvaal from some place outside it must produce their certificates before the inspector on duty. Certificates must be produced on demand in courts which the holder attended on business, and in revenue offices which issued him a trading or bicycle licence.

Thus, if an Indian wanted any Government officer to perform any service, the officer could ask to see his certificate of registration before granting his request. Refusal to produce the certificate would be also held to be an offence for which the person refusing could be fined or sent to prison.

I have never known legislation of this nature being directed against any free man in any part of the world. I know that indentured Indians in Natal are subject to a drastic system of passes, but these poor fellows could hardly be classed as free men. However, even the laws to which the indentured labourers were subject were mild in comparison with the Ordinance outlined above, and the penalties imposed were nothing when compared with the penalties laid down in this Ordinance. A trader with assets running into *lakhs* could be deported under this new Ordinance and thus confronted with utter ruin in a moment. There are some drastic laws directed against criminal tribes in India with which this Ordinance might easily be compared in its character and scope.

The giving of finger-prints, required by this Ordinance, was quite a novelty in South Africa. In order to study some literature on the subject, I read a volume on finger-prints by Mr. Henry, a police officer, from which I gathered that full finger-prints are thus required by law only from criminals. I was therefore shocked by this compulsory requirement regarding finger-prints. Again, the registration of women and children under sixteen was proposed for the first time by this Ordinance. This would meet with the strongest objection from the Transvaal Indian community.

The next day a small meeting of the leading Transvaal

Indians was held, to whom I explained the Ordinance word by word. It shocked them intensely, just as it had shocked me. One of them said in a burst of passion: "If anyone came forward to demand a certificate from my wife, I would shoot him on the spot and take the consequences."

Seeing his excitement I asked him to be silent. "This is a very serious crisis," I said, addressing the meeting; "we must judge the whole matter calmly. If the Ordinance is passed and if we acquiesced in its being made law, then it is likely soon to be imitated all over South Africa. It is clearly designed to strike at the very root of our existence in this country as free citizens. This is surely not the last step. It is the first step which is now taken with a view to hounding us out of the country. We are therefore responsible for the safety, not only of the ten or fifteen thousand Indians in the Transvaal, but of the entire Indian community in South Africa. The fate of Indians in Natal and the Cape depends upon our resistance.

"Again, if we fully grasp what this legislation means, we shall find that India's honour is in our keeping. For the Ordinance seeks to humiliate not only ourselves but also India, our Motherland. The humiliation consists of the degradation of innocent men. No one will take it upon himself to say that we have done anything to deserve such an Ordinance directed against us. We are innocent, and an insult offered to a single innocent member of a nation is the same thing as insulting the nation as a whole. It will be wrong, therefore, to be hasty, impatient or angry. That cannot save us from the onslaught. But God will come to our help if only we calmly carry out in time measures of resistance, presenting a united front and

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bearing the hardships, which such moral resistance is certain to bring in its train."

All the Indian leaders present realized the extreme seriousness of the situation. They resolved at once to hold a public meeting at which a number of strong resolutions should be proposed and passed. The Old Empire Theatre, in Johannesburg, was hired for the purpose, and due notice was given.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE SATYAGRAHA OATH

THE MEETING WAS held on September 11, 1906. It was attended by Indian delegates from various places in the Transvaal. But I must confess that even I had not then understood all the implications of the resolutions which I had helped to frame; nor had I gauged all the possible conclusions to which they might lead.

The Old Empire Theatre at Johannesburg was packed from floor to ceiling. In every face I could read the expectation of something strange about to happen. Abdul Gani, Chairman of the Transvaal British Association, presided. He was one of the oldest Indian residents of the Transvaal. The most important among the resolutions passed by the meeting was the famous Fourth Resolution, by which the Indians solemnly determined never to submit to the new Ordinance but to suffer all the penalties, if ever it became law.

I fully explained this resolution to the meeting and received a patient hearing. The business was conducted both in Hindi and Gujarati. There were also Tamil and Telugu speakers, who fully explained the proceedings in their respective languages to those from South India who were present. The meeting was thus followed carefully by all alike. At last the main resolution was duly proposed and seconded and supported by several speakers, one of whom was Sheth Haji Habib. The Sheth was a very old and experienced resident of South Africa and he made an impassioned speech. He was deeply moved

and went so far as to say that we must pass this resolution by an oath, having God as our witness, and must never yield a cowardly submission to such a degrading Ordinance. He then went on solemnly to declare, in the name of God, that he would never submit. He advised all present to do the same.

When Sheth Haji Habib came to the solemn declaration on oath, in the name of God, I was at once startled and put on my guard. Only at that critical moment did I realize fully both my own responsibilities and that of the community. For the Transvaal Indians had passed many resolutions before this and had amended them afterwards in the light of further reflection. There were even cases where resolutions that had been passed had never been observed. But no one had introduced the name of God before.

It is true that in the abstract there ought not to be any distinction between a resolution and an oath taken in the name of God. When an intelligent man makes a deliberate resolve, he never swerves from it by a hair's breadth till it is accomplished. With him, his resolution once made carries as much weight as a declaration with God as witness. But the world takes no note of abstract principles. It imagines an ordinary resolution and an oath in the name of God to be poles asunder. A man who makes an ordinary resolution is not ashamed of himself when he deviates from it; but a man who violates an oath is not only ashamed of himself, but is looked upon by society as a sinner. This imaginary distinction has struck such a deep root in the human mind that a person making a statement on oath before a judge is held to have committed perjury if the statement is proved



to be false. He receives drastic punishment for such a heinous offence. Possessing, as a lawyer, much experience of the solemnity of such pledges, I was first of all taken aback by Sheth Habib's suggestion of an oath.

In a moment, however, I thought out quickly all the possible consequences, and soon my perplexity gave place to enthusiasm. Although I had never even thought of taking an oath or inviting others to do so, when I went to the meeting, I warmly approved of the Sheth's suggestion. At the same time, it seemed to me that the people who were present ought first to have explained to them carefully the meaning and consequence of an oath. Then after that, if they were prepared to pledge themselves, they should be encouraged to do so; otherwise, it would be understood that they were not yet ready to stand the final test. Therefore I asked the President for permission to explain to the meeting the implications of Sheth Haji Habib's suggestion. The President readily granted leave and I rose to address the meeting.

"I wish to explain," said I, "that there is a vast difference between this resolution and every other which we have passed up to date. This one is so grave that our whole existence in South Africa depends on its faithful observance. The manner of passing the resolution suggested by our friend is a most solemn one and it is entirely new to us as a community. The proposal itself redounds to the credit of Sheth Haji Habib, and it also lays a burden of responsibility upon him. I tender him my congratulations, and deeply appreciate his suggestion. But if you adopt it at this meeting you will share his responsibility. Therefore you yourselves must understand

what this responsibility is; and as an adviser and servant of the community, it is my duty fully to explain this to you.

"We all believe in one and the same God, notwithstanding our religious differences. To pledge ourselves, or to take an oath, in the name of God is not a mere trifle. If, after taking such an oath, we violate our pledge we are guilty before God and man. Personally I hold that a man who deliberately and intelligently takes a pledge and then breaks it, forfeits his own manhood. Just as a copper coin treated with mercury not only becomes valueless but also makes its owner liable to punishment for fraud, so a person who lightly pledges his word and then breaks it becomes a man of straw and fits himself for punishment here as well as hereafter. Sheth Haji Habib is now proposing to administer an oath of a very serious character. There is no one in this meeting who can be classed as an infant or as wanting in intelligence. You are well advanced in age and have seen the world; many of you are delegates and have discharged important duties, therefore not one of us can hope to excuse himself by saying that he did not know what he was about when he took the oath.

"Pledges and vows are only taken on rare occasions. A man who takes a vow too often is sure to stumble. But if I can imagine a crisis in the history of the Indian community of South Africa, when it would be in the fitness of things to take a pledge, that crisis is surely before us. There is obvious wisdom in taking serious steps with great caution and hesitation. But these things have their limits and the limit is reached. The Government has taken leave of all sense of decency. We shall

only be betraying our cowardice if we cannot stake our all at such a time of danger as this.

"Thus the present is the proper time to take an oath. But every one must consider for himself first of all whether he has the will and the ability to keep it. Resolutions of this nature cannot be passed by majority vote. Only those who accept the oath in person can be bound by it. This pledge must not be taken merely with a view to produce an effect on outsiders. Every one must search his own heart, and if the inner voice assures him that he has the requisite strength to carry him through to the end, then only should he pledge himself and then only will his pledge bear fruit.

"If we look to the consequences, we may be assured that if the Indians who take the pledge prove true to their word and if the majority of the community pledge themselves, this new Ordinance will never be passed into law, and even if it is passed it may be repealed. But while, on the one hand, we may hope for the best we must always be prepared for the worst. Imagine that all of us present here, numbering about three thousand, pledge ourselves, and yet the remaining ten thousand Indians in the Transvaal hold back. We may then quite possibly only provoke ridicule in the beginning. But we shall go on till we succeed. Again, it is quite possible that some of those who pledge themselves may weaken at the very first trial. We may have to remain hungry and suffer from extreme heat and cold. Hard labour is likely to be imposed upon us in prison. We may even be flogged by the warders. Or we may not be imprisoned but fined heavily and our property attached and held up to auction for non-payment. Though some of us are

wealthy to-day we may be reduced to poverty to-morrow. We may even be deported from South Africa for good.

"Suffering from hunger and similar hardships in jail, some of us may fall ill or even die. Our wisdom therefore lies in pledging ourselves, knowing full well that we shall have to suffer things like these and even worse. If someone asks me when and how the struggle will end, I can assert with confidence that provided the entire community manfully stands the test, the end will be soon. But if many of us fall back, under stress of trial, the struggle will be prolonged. At the same time I can boldly declare that so long as there is even a handful of men true to their pledge, there can only be one end to the struggle, and that is victory.

"Last of all I have to speak about my personal responsibility. If I am warning you of the risks, I am at the same time fully conscious of my own responsibility. It is possible that a majority of those present here may take the pledge in a fit of enthusiasm or indignation but might weaken under the ordeal, and only a handful might be left to face the final test. Even then there is only one course open to me, namely, to die, but not to submit to the law. Even if everyone else were to hold back, leaving me alone, I am confident that I should never violate my pledge. Please do not misunderstand me. I am not suggesting this in a boastful spirit, but I wish earnestly to put you on your guard. I would respectfully suggest that if you have not the will or the ability to stand firm even when you are perfectly isolated, you should not only refuse to take the pledge yourselves but you should here and now declare your opposition to it. Each single man should fully realize his responsibilities

and then only pledge himself quite independently of others. He should understand that he himself must be true to his pledge even unto death."

I spoke to this effect and resumed my seat. The meeting heard me, word by word, in perfect silence. Other leaders also spoke. All dwelt upon their responsibility and that of the audience.

Then the President rose. He also made the situation clear, and at last all present, standing with upraised hands, took an oath, with God as witness, not to submit to the Ordinance if it became law.

I can never forget that scene. It is present before my mind's eye as I write. The enthusiasm of those present knew no bounds.

The very next day there was an accident in the theatre owing to which it was wholly destroyed by fire. Friends brought me the news of the fire and congratulated me on the good omen, which signified to them that the Ordinance would meet the same fate as the theatre. But I have never been influenced by such omens and therefore I did not attach any weight to this coincidence, but I have only taken note of it as a demonstration of the courage of those days.

The workers did not let the grass grow under their feet after this great meeting. They went all over the Transvaal. Pledges of passive resistance were taken at every centre. The principal topic of discussion in *Indian Opinion* was the Black Ordinance. Steps were taken at once to meet the Transvaal Government. A deputation waited on Mr. Duncan, the Colonial Secretary, which informed him among other things about the pledges that had been solemnly taken. Haji Habib, who was a

member of the deputation, spoke with great emotion to the Minister. "If any officer," he declared, "proceeds to take my wife's finger-prints, I warn you I shall not be able to restrain myself. I shall kill him there and then and die myself."

The Minister stared at the Sheth's face for awhile and said: "The Government are reconsidering whether it is advisable or not to make the Ordinance applicable to women, and I can give you assurance even now that the clauses relating to women will be deleted. The Government has understood your feelings in the matter and desires to respect them. But for the other provisions I am sorry to inform you that the Administration will remain adamant. After due deliberation, General Botha has asked you to agree to this Ordinance. It appears to be essential to the very existence of Europeans in the Transvaal. The Government will certainly consider any suggestion about details which you make, but will not forgo the Ordinance itself. My advice to you, therefore, is that your chief interest should lie in agreeing to the legislation and proposing changes as regards details."

The deputation withdrew, after informing Mr. Duncan that in spite of his advice any acquiescence in the proposed Ordinance was impossible. Sheth Haji Habib thanked him for his implied intention of exempting women from its provisions.

It is difficult to say whether this exemption was the result of the community's firmness or whether the Government had made this concession as an after-thought owing to the practical difficulties involved. It was reported in the Transvaal that the decision to exempt women had been taken independently of the Indian claim. The

community, however, were confident that there was some direct connection between their own united action and this exemption. Their fighting spirit rose accordingly.

None of us knew at the time what name to give the movement. I had used at first the term "passive resistance" in describing it; but I had not quite understood the current implications of this English phrase. Some new principle had come into being among us, and I had tried to express it as well as I could in English. Yet as the struggle advanced the phrase "passive resistance" clearly gave rise to confusion. Also it seemed shameful to us to allow this great struggle to be known only by an English title without an Indian equivalent. It could never thus pass as current coin among us; for a great number of Indians in the Transvaal could not speak English. A small prize was therefore offered to the reader who invented the best designation for our struggle. The meaning of what we were doing had been already fully discussed in *Indian Opinion*. Therefore the competitors for the prize had sufficient material to serve as a basis for fashioning an Indian word.

Maganlal Gandhi<sup>1</sup> was one of the competitors and he suggested the word "Sadagraha," meaning "firmness in a good cause." I liked the word, but it did not fully represent the whole idea which I wished to connote. Therefore I corrected the word to "Satyagraha." Satya (Truth) implies Love: and Agraha (Firmness) serves as a synonym for Force. So I began to call the Indian movement "Satyagraha." By this I meant the Force which is born of Truth and Love. After this we gave up the use of the phrase "passive resistance" altogether.

<sup>1</sup> He was Mahatma Gandhi's most trusted lieutenant who died in the year 1927.

As the movement advanced, Englishmen too began to watch it with interest. Although the English newspapers in the Transvaal generally wrote in support of the Europeans and of the Black Ordinance, they willingly published contributions from well-known Indians. They also printed in full Indian representations to Government, or at least made a summary of them. Sometimes they sent their reporters to important meetings, and at other times they kindly made room for the brief reports we sent them. These amenities were of course very useful to us in our struggle. After awhile some leading Europeans came to take a personal interest in the movement.

One of these, Mr. Hosken, was a prominent citizen of Johannesburg. He had always been free from colour prejudice, but his interest in the Indian question deepened after the starting of Satyagraha. The Europeans of Germiston, which is almost a suburb of Johannesburg, had expressed a desire to hear me. A meeting was held; Mr. Hosken was present and explained the movement in his opening address. "The Transvaal Indians," he said, "have only had recourse to passive resistance when all other means of obtaining redress had proved unavailing. They do not enjoy the franchise. They are only a few in number. They are weak and have no military weapons. Therefore they have taken to passive resistance, which is the weapon of the weak."

These observations quite took me by surprise. The speech I had intended to make had to be altered in consequence at a moment's notice. In correcting Mr. Hosken's explanation of "passive resistance" I defined the Indian Movement as "Soul Force." I saw at this meeting that the use of the phrase "passive resistance"



was not only inadequate but also in danger of giving rise to terrible misunderstandings.

I do not know when or how the phrase, "passive resistance," came first to be used in English. But lately, among the English people, whenever a small minority did not approve of some obnoxious piece of legislation, instead of rising in rebellion they took the passive resistance step of not submitting to the law and inviting penalties of non-submission upon their heads. For instance, when the British Parliament passed the Education Act some years ago, the Nonconformists offered passive resistance under the leadership of Dr. Clifford. Again, the movement of the English women to obtain the vote was known as "passive resistance." It was in view of these two cases that Mr. Hosken described "passive resistance" as a weapon of the weak or the voteless. Dr. Clifford and his Nonconformists were weak in number, but had the vote. The Suffragettes, on the other hand, had not got any franchise rights, but like the Nonconformists' leaders they were also weak in numbers. Yet their suffrage movement did not eschew the use of physical force. Some of the women fired buildings and even assaulted men. I do not think they ever intended to kill anyone. But they did intend to thrash people when an opportunity occurred, and even thus to make things hot for them.

But brute force had absolutely no place in the Indian movement in any circumstances whatever. No matter how badly they suffered, the Satyagraha never used physical force. Even though they might have used it effectively, they refused to do so.

My point is that in planning the Indian movement

there never was the slightest thought given to the possibility or otherwise of offering armed resistance. Satyagraha is "Soul Force" pure and simple. Whenever and to whatever extent weapons of violence are made use of, to that extent "Soul Force" is rendered impossible.

For these reasons the result of our using the phrase "passive resistance" in South Africa was somewhat unfortunate. For we were mistakenly held to be, like the Suffragettes, a danger to person and property; and even generous friends like Mr. Hosken imagined us to be weak. The power of suggestion is such that a man at last becomes what he believes himself to be. If we continue to believe ourselves and let others believe that on account of our weakness we offer passive resistance, such resistance would never make us strong. At the earliest opportunity we should give up passive resistance as a weapon of the weak.

On the other hand, if we are Satyagrahis and offer Satyagraha, or "Soul Force," believing ourselves to be strong, two clear results follow as a matter of course. By fostering the idea of strength, we grow stronger and stronger ourselves, so that, with the increase in our strength, our Satyagraha becomes more and more effective. Secondly, while there is little scope for love in passive resistance, on the other hand love has its full place in Satyagraha. Not only is hatred excluded, but it is a positive breach of the ruling principle of Satyagraha to have anything to do with violence or hate.

Jesus Christ has been acclaimed as the Prince of passive resisters; but I submit that in His case passive resistance must mean Satyagraha.

There are not many instances in history of passive

resistance in the sense of Satyagraha. A single example of modern times is that of the Doukhobors of Russia cited by Tolstoy. The phrase "passive resistance" was not, I believe, employed to denote the patient suffering of oppression by thousands of devout Christians in the early days of Christianity. I would, therefore, rather class them as Satyagrahis. And if their conduct were ever to be described as passive resistance, then passive resistance in that case would become synonymous with Satyagraha.

In the Transvaal itself we took all necessary measures for resisting the Black Act by moral force alone. We approached the Local Government with petitions and memorials. We held protest meetings. The Legislative Council deleted the clause affecting women, but the rest of the Ordinance was passed practically without any modification. The spirit of our community was then high, and having closed its ranks it was unanimous in opposition to the Ordinance.

No one, therefore, was despondent. We still, however, adhered to our resolution to exhaust all the appropriate constitutional remedies before starting Satyagraha itself in its full form of direct action. The Transvaal was a Crown Colony at that time, so that the Imperial Government was responsible for its legislation. Therefore the royal assent to measures passed by the Transvaal legislature was not a mere formality. Often it might so happen that the King, as advised by his Ministers, might withhold his assent to such measures if they were found to be in conflict with the spirit of the British Constitution. On the other hand, in the case of a Colony enjoying responsible Government, the royal assent to measures

## THE SATYAGRAHA OATH

passed by its legislature becomes usually a matter of course.

I submitted to our community that if a deputation were to go to England it was as well that they should first realize more fully their responsibility in the matter, and with this end in view I placed three suggestions before them. First, although we had taken pledges at the great meeting in the Empire Theatre, we should once again obtain individual pledges from leading Indians, so that if any had given way to doubt or weakness they should be immediately found out. One of the reasons advanced by me in support of this suggestion was that if the deputation was backed up by Satyagraha, we should then have no anxiety and could boldly inform the Secretary of State for India and the Secretary of State for the Colonies what the community were resolved to do. Secondly, arrangements for meeting the expenses of the deputation must be made in advance. Thirdly, the maximum number of members of the deputation should be fixed.

The three suggestions were accepted. Signatures were taken. Many signed the pledge, but still I saw even among the Indians who had previously pledged themselves at the meeting that there were some who now hesitated to sign. When once a man has pledged himself he need not hesitate to pledge himself a hundred times. Yet it is not an uncommon thing to find that a man weakens in regard to pledges, when asked to put down a pledge in black and white on paper, which has been given by word of mouth. The necessary funds for the deputation were found without much trouble.

The greatest difficulty, however, was encountered in

selecting the persons who should go to London. It was agreed at once that I should go. But who should go with me? The Committee took much time in arriving at a decision. Many evenings were spent in discussion, and we had a full experience of the bad habits that are generally prevalent in associations. Some proposed to cut the Gordian knot by asking me to go alone, but I flatly refused. There was hardly any Hindu-Muslim problem in South Africa, but it could not be claimed that there was no difference between the two religious sections of our community, and if these differences never assumed an acute form, this was largely because the leaders had unitedly worked together with devotion and frankness. My advice now was that there must be a Musalman delegate going with me, and that the deputation should be limited to two. But the Hindus at once said that as I represented the Indian community as a whole, there should be a representative of Hindu interests. Some even went further and wished for a larger number still. But in the end everyone understood the true position, and only two of us, H. O. Ali and myself, were elected to go as delegates.

H. O. Ali might be regarded as partly a Malay, for his father was an Indian Musalman and his mother was a Malay. His own home language was Dutch. But he had been so thoroughly educated in English that he could speak Dutch and English equally well. He had also cultivated the art of writing to the newspapers. As a member of the Transvaal British Indian Association he had long been taking part in public affairs. He also spoke Hindustani quite freely.

We set to work as soon as we reached England and

printed the memorial which we had already drafted on board the steamer. Lord Elgin was Colonial Secretary, and Mr. Morley was Secretary for India. We met Dadabhai and through him were introduced to the British Committee of the Indian National Congress. The Committee fully approved our policy. Similarly we met Sir Muncherji Bhownaggee, who was a great help to us. He and Dadabhai Naoroji advised us to secure the co-operation of some impartial and well-known Englishman from India who should introduce our deputation to Lord Elgin. Sir W. W. Hunter was no longer alive, and the name of Sir Lepel Griffin was suggested.

We met Sir Lepel Griffin. He had been opposed to the National Congress movement in India; but he was much interested in the Transvaal Indian question and agreed to lead the deputation, not for the sake of courtesy, but for the righteousness of our cause. He read all the papers and became familiar with the problem.

Our deputation waited upon Lord Elgin, who heard everything with careful attention, expressed his sympathy, referred to his own difficulties, and yet promised to do all he could. The same deputation met Mr. Morley, who also declared his own sympathy with us. Sir William Wedderburn was instrumental in calling a meeting of the Committee of the House of Commons for Indian Affairs in the drawing-room of the House and we placed our case before them as well as we could. We met Mr. Redmond, the leader of the Irish Party, and also as many Members of Parliament as possible. The British Committee of the Indian National Congress was very helpful. But according to British customs only men

belonging to a certain party and holding certain views would join it, while there were many others who had nothing to do with the Indian National Congress and yet rendered us every possible assistance. We determined to organize a Standing Committee upon which all these could come together and thus be united in watching over our interests. Men of all parties liked the idea.

The burden of carrying on the work of an institution chiefly falls upon the Secretary. The Secretary should not only have full faith in the aims and the objects of the institution he represents, but he should also be able to devote nearly all his time to the achievement of these aims and have great capacity for work. Mr. L. W. Ritch, who belonged to South Africa, was formerly articled to me and was now a student for the Bar in London. He satisfied all the requirements. He was there in England and was also desirous of taking up the work. We therefore ventured to form the South African British Indian Committee.

In England and other Western countries there is one barbarous custom of inaugurating movements at dinners. The British Prime Minister delivers in the Mansion House, on each ninth of November, an important speech in which he adumbrates his programme for the year and publishes his own forecast of the future. Cabinet Ministers, among others, are invited to the dinner by the Lord Mayor of London, and when the dinner is over bottles of wine are uncorked and all present drink to the health of the host and the guest. Speeches are made while this merry business is in progress. The toast of the British Cabinet is proposed, and the Prime Minister makes his important speech in reply to it. As in public,

so in private, the person with whom some important conversations are to be held is invited to dinner, and the topic of the day is broached either during or after dinner.

Our deputation had to observe this custom not once but quite a number of times, although, of course, we never drank wine. We thus invited our principal supporters to lunch. About a hundred covers were laid. The idea was to tender our thanks to our friends, to bid them good-bye, and at the same time to constitute the Standing Committee. Here, too, speeches were made after the dinner was over and the Standing Committee was organized. We thus obtained greater publicity for our movement in this typically English manner.



## CHAPTER IX

### IN ENGLAND

AFTER A STAY in England of about six weeks we returned to South Africa. When our steamer reached Madeira, we received a cablegram from Mr. Ritch informing us that Lord Elgin had publicly declared that he was unable, without further consideration, to advise His Majesty the King to sign his name to the Transvaal Asiatic Ordinance.

Our joy at this knew no bounds. The steamer took about a fortnight to reach Cape Town from Madeira, and we had quite a good time during those days building many castles in the air. But the ways of Providence are inscrutable. The castles we then built toppled down.

I must place on record one or two recollections of England that are very dear to me. We had utilized every single minute of our time in that country. The sending out of a large number of circulars could not have been done single-handed, and we were sorely in need of outside help. My experience, ranging over forty years, has taught me that assistance purchased with money can never be compared with purely voluntary service. Fortunately we obtained many volunteers. There were Indian young men in England, engaged in study, who came to visit us, and some of them helped us, day and night, without any hope of reward. None of them refused to do anything, however humble the service, whether it was the writing of addresses, or fixing of postage stamps, or posting and delivering of letters.

But there was an English friend named Symonds who put all the other volunteers into the shade by his self-sacrifice. Whom the gods love die young, and so did this generous young Englishman. When he was in Bombay in 1897 he moved fearlessly among the Indians who had been attacked by the plague and nursed them. It had become a second nature to him never to be daunted by death when ministering to those who were suffering from infectious diseases. He was perfectly free from any racial or colour prejudice. He was independent in temperament, and he believed that truth is always in the minority. It was this belief of his which first drew me to him in Johannesburg, and he often humorously assured me that he would withdraw his support if ever he found me in the majority, since he was of opinion that truth itself is corrupted when it becomes popular. He was private secretary to Sir George Farrar, one of the millionaires of Johannesburg. His knowledge of literature covered a very wide area and he had an unlimited fund of information. As a stenographer he was an expert, and it was fortunate for us that he happened to be in England. I did not know anything about this at the time, but he found us out himself; for our public work had secured for us newspaper advertisement. At once he came to me and expressed his willingness to do anything he could. "I will work," he said, "as a servant if you like, and also if you need a stenographer you will hardly come across anyone more expert than I am. Take me and use me as you will."

We were in need of both kinds of help, and I am not exaggerating things when I say that this noble Englishman toiled for us day and night ceaselessly and without

payment. Symonds was all day long at the typewriter, even up till twelve or one o'clock at night. He would carry messages for me and post letters, always with a genial smile. His monthly income was about forty-five pounds, but he spent it all in helping his friends and others. He was about thirty years of age and up to that time he had not married. He wanted to remain unmarried all his life. I pressed him hard to accept some payment, but he flatly refused. "I would be failing," he said, "in my duty if I accepted any remuneration for such service as this."

On the last night, I well remember, he kept awake working till three o'clock in the early morning while we were winding up our business and packing up our things. He parted with us next day, after seeing us off on the steamer, and a sad parting it was.

We were so punctilious in keeping the accounts of the deputation that we preserved even such trifling vouchers as the receipts for money spent for soda water on the steamer. Similarly we kept the receipts for telegrams. I do not remember to have entered a single item under sundries when writing out the detailed accounts. As a rule, sundries did not figure in our accounts at all, and if they did they were intended to cover a few pennies or shillings whose spending we could not recall when writing the accounts at the end of the day.

I have clearly observed in this life that we become responsible agents from the time we reach years of discretion. As long as we are with our parents, we must account to them for money or business they entrust to us. They may be certain of our rectitude and may not ask for accounts, but that does not lessen our respon-

sibility. When we become independent householders, there arises a new responsibility to our own family. We are not the sole proprietors of our acquisitions, our family is co-sharer along with us. We must therefore account for every single farthing for their sake. If such is our responsibility in private life, in public life it is all the greater.

I have observed that voluntary workers are apt to behave as if they were not bound to render a detailed account of the money entrusted to them, because, like Caesar's wife, they are above suspicion. This is sheer nonsense; for the keeping of accounts has nothing whatever to do with trustworthiness or the reverse. It is an independent duty, whose performance is essential to clean living; and if the leading national workers do not ask for accounts, out of a sense of false courtesy or fear, they are equally to blame. If a paid servant is bound to account for work done and money spent by him, the volunteer is doubly bound to do so; for his labour is his own reward.

As soon as we landed at Cape Town, and even more when we reached Johannesburg, we saw that we had sadly overrated the Madeira cablegram. Mr. Ritch, who sent it, was not responsible for this. He cabled only what he had heard about the measure being disallowed. The Transvaal, in the year 1906, was still a Crown Colony. Each colony is represented in England by an Agent, whose duties are to instruct the Secretary of State for the Colonies in all matters affecting Colonial interests. The Transvaal was then represented by Sir Richard Solomon, the noted lawyer of South Africa. Lord Elgin had disallowed the Black Act in consultation with him.

Responsible government was to be conferred on the Transvaal on January 1, 1907. Lord Elgin therefore assured Sir Richard that if an identical measure was passed by the Transvaal Legislature after the grant of responsible government, it would receive the royal assent. But so long as the Transvaal was a Crown Colony, the Imperial Government would be held directly responsible for any class legislation; and as racial discrimination was a departure from the fundamental principles of the British Empire, he could not but advise His Majesty to disallow the measure in question.

If the measure was thus to be disallowed only in name, Sir Richard Solomon had every reason to be satisfied with an arrangement so convenient from his point of view. I have characterized this as crooked policy, but I believe it could be given a still harsher title with perfect justice. The Imperial Government is directly responsible for the legislation of Crown Colonies, and there is no place in its constitution for discrimination on the ground of race or colour. So far, so good. One can also understand that the Imperial Government could not all at once disallow measures passed by the legislatures of Colonies enjoying responsible government. But to hold private conferences with Colonial Agents in advance and promise royal assent to legislation, which is in open violation of the Constitution, is a breach of faith and an injustice.

Lord Elgin by his assurance only encouraged the Transvaal Government all the more in their anti-Asiatic campaign. Yet if such was his intention he should have told this in plain terms to the Indian deputation instead of speaking sympathetically to us. The British Empire

cannot really escape responsibility even for the legislation of a Dominion enjoying responsible government. For they are bound to accept the fundamental principles of the British Constitution. No British Dominion, for instance, can revive the institution of legalized slavery. If Lord Elgin disallowed this Black Act of the Transvaal because it was an improper piece of legislation, it was his clear duty privately to have warned Sir Richard Solomon that the Transvaal could not enact such an iniquitous law even after responsible government had been given. If the Transvaal had any intention of doing so, the Imperial Government would be constrained to consider afresh the advisability of granting it the higher responsible status. At least, he should have told Sir Richard that responsible government could be conferred only on the one condition that the rights of the Indians were fully safeguarded.

Instead of following such a straightforward course, Lord Elgin made an outward show of friendliness to the Indians, while at the same time secretly supporting the Transvaal Government and encouraging it to pass the very same law which he had vetoed himself. Unfortunately, this is not the only case of such tortuous diplomacy undertaken in the British Empire. Even an indifferent student of its history will easily recall similar incidents.

In Johannesburg the sole topic of conversation was the deceit practised upon us by Lord Elgin and the Imperial Government. Our disappointment in South Africa was as deep as had been our joy in Madeira. Yet the immediate consequence of this deception was that the Community became even more determined and

enthusiastic than before. Everyone said that we must never fear, because our struggle was independent of any help of the Imperial Government. We must look for assistance only to our own selves and to God, in whose name we had pledged ourselves to offer moral resistance. Even crooked policy would in time be straightened out if only we were true to ourselves.

Responsible government was established in the Transvaal. The first measure passed by the new Parliament was the budget; the second was the Asiatic Registration Act. Except for an alteration in the date specified in one of its clauses, which lapse of time made necessary, it was an exact copy of the original Ordinance and it was rushed through all its stages at a single sitting on March 21, 1907. The disallowance of the Ordinance, therefore, was forgotten as if it was a dream. The Indians submitted memorials as usual, but who would listen to them? The Act was proclaimed to take effect from July 1, 1907. Indians were called upon to apply for registration before the end of that month. The delay in enforcing the Act was due, not to any desire to oblige the Indians, but to the exigencies of the case. Some time must elapse before the formal sanction of the Crown to the measure was signified. The forms set forth in schedule had to be prepared. The opening of permit offices at various centres would also have to be arranged. The delay, therefore, was intended solely for the Transvaal Government's own convenience.

When our deputation was on its way to England, I happened to talk about the anti-Asiatic legislation in the Transvaal to an Englishman who had settled in South Africa. When I informed him of the object of our visit

to England, he exclaimed, "I see you are going to London in order to get rid of your dog's collar." He thus compared the Transvaal permit to a dog's collar, but I did not quite understand him then, and I cannot exactly say now whether he intended to express his contempt for us by this phrase or whether he merely meant to show his own strong feeling in the matter. In order not to do him an injustice, I would gladly assume the latter.

The Transvaal Government, on the one side, was preparing to fasten the "dog's collar" round our necks, while on the other side the Indians were getting ready to resist it. We were concentrating various measures to strengthen our resolution never to wear that collar. We were writing letters to friends in England, as well as in India, and trying thus to keep in touch with the larger situation from day to day. But the Satyagraha struggle depended very little upon help from outside. After all, it is only internal remedies that are ultimately effective.

One important question before us was what organization we should use for carrying on the struggle. The Transvaal British Indian Association had a large membership and was a powerful body. Satyagraha had not yet seen the light of day when it was established. The Association had resisted in the past, and would have to resist in the future, not one obnoxious law, but quite a host of them. Besides organizing resistance to obnoxious laws, it had many other functions of a political and social nature to perform. But all the members of the Association were not pledged to resist the Black Act through Satyagraha. We should also have to take account of external



risks which the Association would run if it was identified with the Satyagraha struggle. The Transvaal Government, for instance, might declare the movement to be seditious and make illegal all institutions supporting it. In such a case, what would be the position of its members who were not Satyagrahis? And what about the funds which were contributed at a time when Satyagraha was not so much as thought of? All these were weighty considerations. Lastly, the Satyagrahis were strongly of opinion that they not only must not entertain any ill will against those who refused to join the struggle, but must maintain their present friendly relations unimpaired and even work side by side with them in all other movements except the Satyagraha struggle.

For all these reasons the community came to the conclusion that the Satyagraha struggle should not be carried on through any of the existing organizations. They might render all help in their power and resist the Black Act in every way open to them. But for the purpose of Satyagraha itself, a new body named the "Passive Resistance Association" was started. It will be seen from this English name that the word Satyagraha had not yet been invented when this new Association came into existence. Time fully justified the wisdom of constituting a fresh body for the work, and the Satyagraha movement might perhaps have suffered serious defeat if any of the existing organizations had been mixed up with it. Numerous members joined the new Association, and the Community provided its funds in a generous manner.

My experience has taught me that no good effort ever stops short for want of funds. This does not mean that

any temporal movement can go on without money, but it does mean that whenever it has good men and true at its helm, it is bound to attract to itself the requisite funds. On the other hand, a movement often takes a downward course from the time when it is afflicted with an excess of money. Whenever, therefore, a public institution is carried on out of its own investments, I dare not call it a sin, but I do say that it is a highly improper procedure. The people should be the bank of all public institutions. No public body should last a day longer than the people wish. An institution conducted with the interest of accumulated capital ceases to be amenable to public opinion. It tends to become autocratic and self-righteous. This is not the place to dwell upon the corruption of many social and religious institutions which depend upon endowments. The phenomenon is so common that he who runs may read.

Lawyers and English-educated persons do not by any means enjoy the monopoly of hair-splitting. Even illiterate Indians in the Transvaal were quite capable of drawing minute distinctions and spinning fine arguments. Some argued that the pledge taken at the Old Empire Theatre, Johannesburg, had been fulfilled because the original Ordinance had been disallowed. Those whose courage had weakened took shelter under this plea. The argument was not quite devoid of force, yet it could not impress those whose resistance was not to the law as a law, but to the vicious underlying principle. All the same, it was found necessary to re-administer the path of resistance for safety's sake, in order to reinforce the energy of the community and to probe the extent of its weakness. Meetings were therefore held in every place, and the

whole situation was explained over again. The oath was administered afresh and in the end the spirit of the community was found to be as high as ever.

Meanwhile the fateful month of July was gradually drawing to a close. On the last day of that month we had resolved to call a mass meeting of Indians at Pretoria, the capital of the Transvaal. Delegates from other places were also invited to attend. The meeting was held in the open air on the grounds of the Pretoria Mosque. After we had started our Satyagraha our meetings were so largely attended that no building was large enough to accommodate them. The entire Indian population in the Transvaal did not exceed thirteen thousand souls, of whom over ten thousand lived in Johannesburg and Pretoria. An attendance at public meetings of two thousand would be considered satisfactory in any part of the world. A movement of mass Satyagraha is impossible on any other conditions.

Where the struggle is wholly dependent upon internal strength, it cannot go on without mass discipline. The active workers, therefore, did not consider that such a large attendance was anything at all surprising. From the very first they had decided to hold public meetings only in the open air. In this way any serious expense was avoided. None had to go back from the meeting place disappointed for want of room. All these meetings were for the most part very quiet. The audiences listened to everything that was said attentively. If those who were far away from the platform could not hear the speaker they would ask him to raise his voice. It need hardly be mentioned that there were no chairs provided. Everyone sat on the ground. There was a very small platform for

the use of the Chairman, the speaker, and a couple of friends. A small table and a few chairs or stools were placed upon it.

Yusuf Ismail Mian, the acting-Chairman of the British Indian Association, presided over this inaugural meeting of the Satyagraha in Pretoria.

Since the time for issuing permits under the Black Act was drawing near, the Indians were naturally anxious in spite of all their enthusiasm; but no less anxious were General Botha and General Smuts, notwithstanding the fact that they had all the might of the Transvaal Government at their disposal. No one would like to bend a whole community to his will by sheer physical force. General Botha had therefore sent Mr. Hosken to this meeting to admonish us. The meeting received him cordially.

"You know I am your friend," he said, "and therefore I need scarcely tell you that my feelings in this matter are with you. If at all I had the power, I would gladly make your opponents accede to your demands. But you know as well as I do the hostility of the Transvaal Europeans. I am here at General Botha's request. He has asked me to be the bearer of his message to this meeting. He entertains a feeling of respect for you and understands your sentiments, but he says he is quite helpless in this matter. All the Europeans in the Transvaal unanimously ask for such a law, and he himself is convinced of its necessity. The Indians know full well how powerful the Transvaal Government is. The law itself has been endorsed by the Imperial Government of Great Britain. The Indians have done all they could and have acquitted themselves like men. But now that their

opposition has failed, and the law has been passed, the community must prove its loyalty and love of peace by submission. General Smuts will carefully look into any representations you may make suggesting minor changes in the regulations framed in virtue of the Registration Act. My own advice to you is that you should comply with the General's message. I know that the Transvaal Government is firm regarding this law. To resist it will be to dash your heads against a stone wall. I only hope that your community will neither be ruined by fruitless opposition, nor call down needless suffering on your own heads."

I translated this speech to the meeting, word by word, and further put them on their guard on my own behalf. Mr. Hosken retired after his speech amidst cheers.

It was now time for the Indian speakers to address the meeting. One of these was Sheth Ahmad Muhammad Kachhalia, who afterwards became the hero of the whole movement. I knew him only as a client and as an interpreter. He had never before now taken a leading part in public affairs. He had a good working knowledge of English, which he had so far improved by practice that when he took his friends to English lawyers he spoke for them as an interpreter. But this was not his profession; he worked in this respect only as a friend. At first he used to hawk piecegoods for his livelihood and then to trade on a small scale in partnership with his brother. He was a Muhammadan Meman of Surat and enjoyed a high reputation in his religion. His knowledge of Gujarati was limited, but this too had considerably advanced as he was schooled by experience. He had such quick intelligence that he very easily grasped anything

that was put to him. He solved legal difficulties with a faculty that often astonished me. He would not hesitate to argue law, even with lawyers, and very often his arguments were worthy of very careful consideration.

I have never come across a man who could surpass Sheth Ahmad Muhammad Kachhalia in courage and steadfastness. He sacrificed everything he had for the community's sake, and was always a man of his word. He was a strict orthodox Musalman, being one of the trustees of the Surati Meman Mosque. But at the same time, he looked upon Hindus and Musalmans with an equal eye. I do not remember that he ever fanatically or improperly sided with Musalmans against Hindus. Perfectly fearless and impartial, he never hesitated to point out their faults to the Hindus, as well as to Musalmans, whenever he found any necessity. His simplicity and humility were worthy of imitation. My close contact with him for years leads me to hold firmly to the opinion that a community can rarely boast of having in their midst a man of the stamp of Sheth Muhammad Kachhalia.

Kachhalia Sheth was one of the speakers at the Pretoria meeting. He made a very short speech. "Every Indian knows," he said, "what the Black Act is and what it implies. I have heard Mr. Hosken attentively and so have you. His speech has only confirmed me in my own resolution. We know how powerful the Transvaal Government is. But it cannot do anything more than enact such an unjust law. It may cast us into prison, confiscate our property, deport us, or hang us. All this we shall bear cheerfully, but we simply cannot put up with this law."

I observed that while saying this, Kachhalia Sheth

was very deeply moved. His face grew red, the veins on his neck and on his forehead were swollen as the blood coursed rapidly through them. His whole body was shaking. Moving the fingers of his right hand to and fro on his neck, he thundered forth: "I swear in the name of Allah that even though I am hanged I will never submit to this law. Let everyone present here take the same oath."

He took his seat. As he moved his fingers on his throat, some of those seated on the platform smiled, and I remember with shame that I joined them. I was doubtful whether Kachhalia Sheth would be able fully to translate his brave words into action. Now every time I think about that scene I am ashamed of that doubt. For Kachhalia Sheth always remained in the forefront, without a moment's flinching, among the many Indians who observed their pledge to the letter in that great struggle.

The whole meeting cheered him as he spoke. Others at that time knew him very much better than I did. They had realized that Kachhalia only said what he meant and meant what he said. There were many other spirited speeches also. But I have singled out Kachhalia Sheth's for special mention because it proved a prophecy of all his subsequent career. Not every one of those enthusiastic speakers that day stood the final test. But Kachhalia Sheth died four years after the struggle was over, in 1918, serving the community to the very last.

Let me close with a reminiscence of this great soul which may not find a place elsewhere. At Tolstoy Farm, there lived with me a number of Satyagraha families. Kachhalia Sheth sent his son Ali, who was twelve years

old, to be educated there as an example to the others and in order that the boy might be brought up to a life of simplicity and service. It was due to the example he thus set that other Musalmans likewise sent their boys to the Farm. Ali was a modest, bright, truthful and straightforward boy. God took him unto Himself before his father. If it had been given to this boy to live, I have no doubt that he would have proved himself to be a worthy son of an excellent father.



## CHAPTER X

### THE FIRST ENCOUNTER

THE FIRST DAY of July in the Transvaal saw the opening of all the permit offices for the issue of registration certificates. The community had decided openly to picket these offices. Volunteers were posted on the roads leading to each of these offices. They were to warn weak-kneed Indians against accepting the certificates. Our sentries were provided with badges and expressly instructed not to be impolite to any Indian taking out a permit. They must ask him his name, but if he refused to give it they must not be violent or rude. To every Indian going into the office to get a permit they were to hand a printed paper detailing what injury to the community any submission to the Black Act would involve. If he could not read, they were to explain what was written on the paper. They must behave to the police with due respect. If the police abused or thrashed them, they must suffer peacefully. Should at any time ill-treatment by the police become insufferable, they were to surrender themselves without resistance. Should any incident of ill-treatment by police occur in Johannesburg, it should be brought to my notice immediately. At other places, the local secretaries were to be informed and further instructions were to be asked for. Each party of pickets had a captain whose orders must be obeyed by the rest.

This was the community's first experience of such duties. All who were above the age of twelve were taken

on as pickets, so that there were many young men from twelve to eighteen years of age enrolled. But no one was accepted who was unknown to the local workers. Over and above all these precautions, people were informed by announcements at every public meeting that if anyone who desired to take out a permit was afraid of the pickets, he could ask the workers to detail a volunteer to escort him to the permit office and back. Some did avail themselves of this offer.

The volunteers in every place worked with boundless enthusiasm. They were ever alert and wide awake in the performance of their duties. Generally speaking, there was not much police harshness. When occasionally police violence occurred the volunteers quietly put up with it. They brought to bear upon their work quite an amount of humour, in which the police sometimes joined. On one occasion volunteers were arrested on a charge of obstructing the public traffic. Since non-co-operation did not form part of the struggle in the Transvaal, defence could be made in the Courts.<sup>1</sup> The volunteers were declared innocent and acquitted. This incident further encouraged their high spirits.

Although the Indians who wanted to take out permits were thus saved from any public rudeness and treated with every politeness, I must frankly confess that there also arose a body of men among us, in connection with the movement, who privately threatened those wishing to take out permits. This was a very painful development, and strong measures were adopted by those of us who were in charge to stamp it out as soon as ever it was

<sup>1</sup> In the Non-co-operation Movement in India (1920-1923) volunteers arrested were not allowed to defend themselves in the law courts.

discovered. These private threatenings nearly ceased in consequence, though they were not quite eradicated from the struggle. The threats, however, left a bad impression behind them and thus far injured the cause. Those who were privately threatened sought Government protection and got it. Poison was thus instilled into the community, and those who were weak grew weaker still. The poison spread its virulence because the weak are always apt to be revengeful.

Nevertheless, it was not private threatening which prevented men from registering. Two influences—the force of public opinion and the fear of being known as defaulters—acted as powerful deterrents. I do not know a single Indian who considered it right and proper to submit to the Black Act. Those who submitted did so out of sheer inability to suffer hardships or pecuniary losses, and were therefore ashamed of themselves. This sense of shame, as well as the fear of loss of trade following upon the displeasure of big Indian merchants, pressed heavily upon them, and some leading Indians found a way out of the twofold difficulty. They arranged with the Asiatic Department that an officer should meet them in a private house after ten o'clock at night and give them permits. They thought that in this case no one would know anything about their submission to the law for some months at least. They supposed that as they were among the leading men others would follow suit, thus lightening their burden of shame. It did not matter if they were found out later on.

But the volunteers were so vigilant that the community was kept informed of what happened every moment. Even in the permit office itself there would

be some Indian to give information to the Satyagrahis. Others again, though weak themselves, would be unable to tolerate the idea of the Indian leaders thus disgracing themselves. They would inform the Satyagrahis, hoping that they also might be able to face the hardships if only others were quite firm.

In this way we once received information that certain men were going to take out permits in a certain shop on a certain night. We therefore first tried to dissuade these men. The shop was thoroughly picketed. But human weakness cannot be long suppressed. Some leading men took permits late at night in this way, and thus a breach was made. The next day their names were published by the community. But a sense of shame has its limits. Consideration of self-interest drives even shame away and misleads men out of the strait and narrow path. In the end, something like five hundred men took out permits. These were first issued secretly in private houses. But as the sense of shame wore out, some went publicly to the Asiatic Office and obtained certificates of registration.

When the Department found that in spite of all their exertions they could not get more than five hundred Indians willing to register, they decided to arrest one or two leaders. In Germiston there lived many Indians, among whom was Pandit Rama Sundara. This man had a brave look and was endowed with a certain power of fluent speech. He knew a few Sanskrit verses by heart. Hailing from North India, he naturally knew also some stanzas from Tulasi Das's Ramayana, and owing to his designation of Pandit he enjoyed a certain reputation among his people. He delivered a number of spirited

speeches in various places. Some malevolent Indians in Germiston suggested to the Asiatic Department that many Indians would take out permits if this man, Rama Sundara, was arrested.

The officer concerned could scarcely resist the temptation thus offered. So Rama Sundara was put under arrest. This being the first case of its kind, the Government as well as the Indians were much agitated over it. Rama Sundara, who before was known only to the people of Germiston, became in a single day famous all over South Africa. Government took special measures which were altogether unnecessary for the preservation of peace. In the Court, Rama Sundara was accorded due respect as no ordinary prisoner. Eager Indians filled the Court-room. Rama Sundara was sentenced to a month's simple imprisonment. He was kept in a separate cell in the Europeans' ward of Johannesburg jail. People were allowed freely to meet him. He was permitted to receive food from outside, and was entertained every day on delicacies prepared for him by the community. Thus he was provided with everything he wanted.

The day on which he was sentenced was celebrated with great public rejoicing. There was no trace of depression, but on the other hand there was exultation. Hundreds were now ready to go to jail. The officers of the Asiatic Department were disappointed in their hope of a bumper harvest of registrations. They did not get a single registration even from Germiston. Thus the only gainer was the Indian community.

The month was soon over. Rama Sundara was released and was taken in a procession to the place of meeting. Vigorous speeches were made. Rama Sundara was

smothered with garlands of flowers. The volunteers held a feast in his honour, and hundreds of Indians envied his good luck and were sorry that they had not had the same chance of suffering imprisonment in such a pleasant manner.

But Rama Sundara turned out to be a spurious coin after all. There was no escape for him from the month's imprisonment, because his arrest came as a surprise. In jail he had enjoyed luxuries to which he had been a stranger outside. Nevertheless, accustomed as he was to a licentious life and addicted to bad habits, the loneliness and restraint of jail life were too much for him. In spite of all the attention showered upon him by jail authorities, as well as by the community, the confinement in jail appeared irksome to him, and on his release he bade a final good-bye to the Transvaal and to the movement.

There are cunning men in every community and in every movement; and so there were in ours. These knew Rama Sundara through and through. But from the idea that even he might become an instrument for good in the Indian cause, they never let me know his secret history until his bubble had finally burst. I subsequently found that he was an indentured Indian labourer who had deserted the plantation before completing his term of indenture. There was nothing discreditable in his having been an indentured labourer. In the end these labourers in the sugar plantation and mines proved to be a most valuable acquisition to the movement, making their own contribution towards the final victory. But it was certainly wrong of him not to have finished his period of indenture.

The history of Rama Sundara has been thus detailed,

not to expose his faults, but to point out a moral. The leaders of every clean movement are bound to see that they admit only clean fighters into it. But every caution notwithstanding, undesirables cannot altogether be kept out. And yet, if leaders are fearless and true, the entry of undesirable persons into a movement unawares does not ultimately injure the cause. When Rama Sundara was found out, he became a man of straw. The community forgot him, but the movement only gathered fresh strength. The imprisonment which he had suffered for the cause of Satyagraha stood to our credit. The enthusiasm created by his trial remained. Taking advantage of his example, weaklings slipped away out of the movement of their own accord.

No one need point a finger of scorn at Rama Sundara. All men are imperfect, and when imperfection is observed in someone in a larger measure than in others, people are apt to blame him. But that is not fair. Rama Sundara did not become weak intentionally; man can alter his temperament and control it, but he cannot eradicate his inner character. God has not given him so much liberty. Although Rama Sundara fled away, who can tell how he might have repented of his weakness? Or, rather, was not his very flight a powerful proof of his repentance? He could have taken out a permit and steered clear of jail by submission to the Black Act. He would even have become a tool of the Asiatic Department and thus gained popularity with the Transvaal Government. But out of shame for his own weak character he hid his face from the community, and even thus did it a service.

While taking note of the weapons, internal as well as external, employed in the Satyagraha struggle, it is

necessary specially to mention *Indian Opinion*, the weekly journal which continues to be published in South Africa up to this very day. The credit for first starting an Indian-owned printing-press in South Africa is due to a Gujarati gentleman, named Madanjit Vyavaharik. After he had conducted the press for a few years, in the midst of many difficulties, he thought of bringing out a newspaper. So he consulted Mansukhlal Nazar and myself. The newspaper was issued from Durban. Mansukhlal Nazar volunteered to act as unpaid editor. From the very first the paper was conducted at a loss. At last we decided to purchase a farm, to settle all the workers upon it, and print our newspaper from the farm itself. The workers were to constitute themselves into a sort of commonwealth or republic. The farm selected for the purpose is situated on a beautiful hill fourteen miles from Durban. The railway station is two miles distant from the farm and is called Phoenix. Thus the settlement itself is called Phoenix.

*Indian Opinion* was formerly published in English, Gujarati, Hindi, and Tamil. But the Hindi and Tamil sections were eventually discontinued. The burden they imposed upon us seemed to be excessive, and we could not find Tamil and Hindi writers willing to settle down on the farm. The paper was thus being published in English and Gujarati when the Satyagraha struggle commenced. Among the settlers on the farm were Gujaratis, Hindustanis and Tamils, as well as Englishmen. After the premature death of Mansukhlal Nazar, his place as editor was taken by an English friend, Herbert Kitchin. Then the post of editor was long filled by Henry S. L. Polak, and during our absence the late



Rev. Joseph Doke acted for us. Through the medium of this paper we could disseminate in a thorough manner the news of the week among the community. The English section kept those Indians informed about the movement who did not know Gujarati; and for Englishmen all over the world who have sympathized with the cause *Indian Opinion* has served the purpose of the weekly news-letter.

I believe that a struggle, which chiefly relies upon its own internal strength, cannot be carried on with any completeness without a newspaper. It has also been my experience that we could not have educated the local Indians, or kept Indians and Europeans all over the world in touch with the course of events in South Africa without the aid of *Indian Opinion*. Therefore it proved itself a useful and potent weapon in our struggle.

While the community was transformed as a result of the struggle, *Indian Opinion* was transformed also. In the beginning we used to accept advertisements and execute job-work in the printing-press. Some of our best men had to be spared for this kind of work. Even when we obtained advertisements for publication, there was constant difficulty in deciding which to accept and which to refuse. One might be inclined to refuse an objectionable advertisement, and yet be constrained to keep it because the advertiser was a leading member of the community. He might take it ill if his advertisement was rejected. Some of the best workers had to be set apart for canvassing and realizing outstanding debts from advertisers. They had also to make use of the flattery which advertisers claim as their due.

The view therefore commended itself to me that if

*Indian Opinion* was conducted, not because it yielded profit but purely with a view to service, then this service should never be imposed upon the community by force, but should be rendered as long as the community wished. And the clearest proof of such a wish would be forthcoming if they became subscribers in sufficiently large numbers to make the paper self-supporting. Finally, it seemed in every way better for all concerned that we should approach the community itself and explain to them the duty of keeping their newspaper going, rather than seek to induce a few traders to place their advertisements with us. The gratifying result would follow that those who were now engrossed in the advertisement department would be able to devote their labours to improving the paper.

The community realized at once their proprietorship of *Indian Opinion*, and their consequent responsibility for maintaining it. The workers were relieved of all anxiety in that respect. Their only care now was to put their best work into the paper so long as the community required it. They were not only not ashamed to ask their fellow-Indians to subscribe, but thought it their duty to do so. A change came over the internal strength and character of the paper, and it became a force to reckon with.

The number of subscribers, which had ranged between twelve and fifteen hundred, increased day by day. The rates of subscription were raised, and yet when the struggle was at its height there were as many as 3,500 subscribers. The number of Indians who could read *Indian Opinion* in South Africa was at the outside twenty thousand in all. Therefore the circulation of over three

thousand copies was satisfactory. The community had made the paper their own to such an extent that if copies did not reach Johannesburg at the expected time I was flooded with complaints. *Indian Opinion* generally reached Johannesburg on Sunday morning. I know of many whose first occupation after they had received their paper was to read the Gujarati section through from beginning to end. One of the company would read it, and the rest would surround him and listen. Not all who wanted to read the paper could afford to subscribe to it by themselves. Some of them would therefore club together for that purpose.

Just as we stopped advertisements in the paper so we ceased to take job-work in the press for nearly the same reason. Compositors had now some time to spare, which was utilized in the publication of books. As here also there was no intention of reaping profits, and the books were only printed to help forward the struggle, they commanded good sales. Thus both the paper and the press made their own valuable contribution to the struggle. Satyagraha gradually took root in the community and an upward tendency began to be apparent.

The Transvaal Government failed to reap any advantage from Rama Sundara's arrest. They noticed the spirit of the Indian community rising higher and higher. The officers of the Asiatic Department were diligent readers of *Indian Opinion*. As we kept no secrets, this weekly paper proved an open book to anyone who wanted to gauge the strength and weakness of the community. The workers had realized at the very outset that secrecy had no place with us. The interest of the community demanded that if the disease or weakness was to be

properly eradicated it must be first diagnosed and given due publicity.

When the officers understood the open policy of *Indian Opinion*, the paper became for them a faithful mirror of the current history of the whole Indian community. They at last came to realize that the strength of the movement could not by any means be broken so long as certain leaders were at large. In consequence, we were served with a notice to appear before the magistrate in Christmas week of 1907.

This was an act of courtesy on the part of the officers concerned. They could have had the leaders arrested by warrant if they had chosen to do so. Instead of this they issued notices. Such a procedure, besides being evidence of their courtesy, betrayed their confidence that the Indian leaders were willing and prepared to be arrested. Those who had thus been warned appeared before the Court on the date specified. It was Saturday, December 18, 1907. They were summoned to show why, having failed to apply for registration, as required by law, they should not be ordered to leave the Transvaal within a given period.

One of these was Mr. Leung Quinn, the leader of the Chinese residents of Johannesburg, who numbered three to four hundred and were either traders or farmers. India is noted for its agriculture. But I believe that we in India are not as far advanced in this respect as the Chinese. The modern progress of agriculture in America and other countries defies description, yet I consider it still to be in an experimental stage. China, on the other hand, is an old country like India, and a comparison between India and China would not be un instructive.

I had carefully observed the agricultural methods of the Chinese near Johannesburg and also had talked with them on the subject. This gave me the strong impression that the Chinese are more intelligent than ourselves. We often allow land to lie fallow, thinking that it is of no more use, while the Chinese would grow good crops upon it, thanks to a minute knowledge of varying soils.

The Black Act applied to the Chinese as well as to the Indians. They therefore joined us in the Satyagraha struggle. Nevertheless, from the first the activities of the two communities were not allowed to be amalgamated. Each worked through its own independent organization. This arrangement produced one beneficial result, that so long as both the communities remained firm, each would be a source of strength to the other. But if one of the two gave way that would leave the morale of the other unaffected, or at least it would steer clear of the danger of total collapse.

Many of the Chinese eventually fell away because their leader played them false. He did not indeed actually submit to the obnoxious law; but one morning someone came and told me that the Chinese leader had fled without handing over charge of the books and money in his possession. It will always be difficult for followers to sustain a conflict in the absence of their leader. Yet for a time this leader did very useful work.

One of the several leading Indians who constituted this first batch of prisoners was Thambi Naidoo. He was a Tamil, born in Mauritius, where his parents had migrated from the Madras Presidency. He was an ordinary trader. While he had received no scholastic education, a wide experience of life had made an excellent

schoolmaster for him. He wrote and spoke English fairly well, although his grammar was not free from faults. He spoke Hindustani and had some knowledge of Telugu, though he never learnt the alphabets of these two languages. In addition to this, he had a very good knowledge of the Creole dialect, which is current in Mauritius, and he knew, of course, one of the South African native languages.

A working knowledge of so many languages was by no means a rare accomplishment among the Indians of South Africa. Hundreds of them could claim a general acquaintance with most of these languages. Such men became good linguists almost without effort. Their brains are not fatigued in childhood by education through the medium of a foreign tongue like English. Their memory is sharp. Therefore they acquire these different languages simply by talking to people who speak them and also by observation. This does not involve any considerable strain on their brain-power, but on the contrary the easy mental exercise leads to a natural development of their intellect all round.

Such had been the history of Thambi Naidoo. He had a keen intelligence and could grasp new facts very quickly. His ever-ready wit was astonishing. He had never seen India, yet his love for the homeland knew no bounds. Patriotism ran through his veins, and his courage was pictured in his face. He was very strongly built and possessed tireless energy. He shone equally at meetings, whether he had to take the chair and lead them, or whether he had merely to do hall-porter's work. He would never be ashamed of carrying a load in the public streets. Night and day were the same to him

when he set to work. None was more ready than he to sacrifice all he had for the sake of the community. If Thambi Naidoo had not been rash and prone to anger, this brave man could easily have assumed the leadership of the community in the Transvaal, in the absence of Kachhalia. While the Transvaal struggle lasted his good qualities were apparent, but in later years his anger and his rashness have proved to be his worst enemies. However that may be, the name of Thambi Naidoo must ever remain famous in the annals of Satyagraha in South Africa.

The magistrate conducted each case separately and ordered all the accused to leave the Transvaal. The time expired on January 10, 1908. On that day we were called upon to attend the Court for sentence. None of us had any defence to offer. All were to plead guilty to the charge of disobeying the order to leave the Transvaal.

I asked leave to make a short statement, and explained that I thought there should be a distinction between my case and those that were to follow. I had just heard from Pretoria that my compatriots had been sentenced to three months' imprisonment with hard labour, and had been fined a heavy amount for whose non-payment they had served a further period of three months' hard labour. If these men had committed an offence, I had committed a greater offence still and I therefore asked the magistrate to impose upon me the heaviest penalty of all. The magistrate did not accede to my request and sentenced me only to two months' simple imprisonment. I had some slight feeling of awkwardness for a brief moment, which was due to the fact that I was standing as an accused in the very Court where I had often appeared

as counsel. But I remembered that the rôle of accused in such a cause was far more honourable than any other. Therefore, when the time came, I did not feel the slightest hesitation in entering the prisoner's box and giving my statement as the accused.

In the Court there were hundreds of Indians as well as some brother members of the Bar in front of me. On the sentence being pronounced, I was at once removed in custody by the police and was then quite alone. The policeman asked me to sit on a bench kept there for prisoners. He shut the door and went away.

At that time, when I was left alone, I fell into deep thought. Home, the law courts where I practised, the public meetings, all passed before me like a dream, and I was now a prisoner. What would happen in these two months? Should I have to serve the full term? If the people courted imprisonment in large numbers, as they had promised, there would be no question of serving the full sentence. But if they failed to fill the prisons, two months would be as tedious as an age. These considerations passed through my mind in less than one-hundredth of the time that it has taken me to put them down on paper.

How vain I had been! I remembered how I had asked the people to consider the prisons as His Majesty's hotels. I had called the suffering consequent upon disobeying the Black Act perfect bliss. I had declared the sacrifice of one's all and even life itself in resisting it as supreme bliss. Where had all this brave experience vanished to-day?

This second train of thought acted upon me like a bracing tonic, and I began to laugh at my own folly.



I wondered what kind of imprisonment would be awarded to the others, and whether they would be kept with me in the same prison. Just then I was disturbed by the police officer, who opened the gates and asked me to go with him. He made me go before him, following me himself. He took me to the prisoners' closed van and asked me to take my seat in it. Thus I was driven to Johannesburg jail.

In jail I was asked to put off my own private clothing. Beforehand, I knew that convicts were stripped naked in jails, and I did not refuse. We had all decided, as Satyagrahis, voluntarily to obey all jail regulations so long as they were not inconsistent with self-respect or religious convictions. The clothes which were given to me to wear were very dirty. I did not at all like to put them on. It was not without pain that I reconciled myself to the idea that I must put up with some dirt.

After the officers had recorded my name and address I was taken to a large cell. There in a short time I was joined by my own compatriots who came in laughing and told me that they had received the same sentence as myself. They explained what had taken place after I had been removed. From them I understood that when my case was over some of the Indians, who were excited, had led out into the streets a procession with black flags in their hands. The police had disturbed the procession and flogged some of its members. We were all happy at the thought that we were to be kept together in the same cell.

The cell door was locked at six o'clock. The door was not composed of bars, but was quite solid, there being high up in the wall a small opening for ventilation,

so that we felt as if we had been locked up in a strong-room.

No wonder the jail authorities did not accord us the good treatment which they had meted out to Rama Sundara. As he had been the first Satyagraha prisoner, the authorities had no idea how he was to be treated. Our batch was fairly large and further arrests were in contemplation. We were therefore kept in the Bantu ward. In South Africa, only two classes of convicts are recognized, namely, the Whites and the Blacks, the Europeans and the Bantus; and the Indians were classed with the latter.

The next morning we found that prisoners without hard labour had the right to wear their own private clothing. If they did not wish to exercise this right, they were given jail clothing assigned to that special class of prisoners. We decided that it was not right to put on our own clothing and that it was appropriate to take the jail uniform. So we informed the authorities accordingly. We were therefore given the clothes assigned to Bantu convicts who were not punished with hard labour. But Bantu prisoners sentenced to simple imprisonment were never very numerous; hence there was a shortage of this class of prisoners' clothing as soon as the other Indians began to arrive. As they did not wish to stand upon ceremony, they readily accepted clothing assigned to hard-labour prisoners. Some of these, however, who came in later preferred to keep their own clothing. I thought this improper, but did not care to insist upon their following the correct procedure in the matter.

From the second or third day the Satyagraha prisoners began to arrive in large numbers. In South Africa, every

hawker has to take out a licence. He must show it to the police whenever asked for it. Nearly every day some policeman would ask to see the licences and arrest those who had none to show. The community had resolved to fill up the jail after our arrests, and in this the hawkers took the lead. It was easy for them to be arrested. They must only refuse to show their licences and this was enough to ensure their arrest. In this way the number of Satyagrahis swelled to more than a hundred in one week. As some few were sure to arrive every day, we received the daily budget of news without a newspaper.

When Satyagrahis began to be arrested in large numbers they were sentenced to imprisonment with hard labour, either because the magistrates lost patience or because, as we ourselves conjectured, they had received special instructions from the Government. Even to-day I think that our own conjecture was correct, since apart from the first few cases, in which simple imprisonment was awarded, never afterwards throughout the long-drawn struggle was there any sentence of simple imprisonment. Even Indian ladies were punished with hard labour. If all the magistrates had not received the same orders from higher quarters, and yet by mere coincidence had sentenced all men and women alike to hard labour, then that must be held to be very nearly a miracle.

## CHAPTER XI

### IMPRISONMENT

THERE WERE ONLY five of us passive resisters in prison at first. On Tuesday, January 14th, Mr. Thambi Naidoo came in along with Mr. Quinn, the president of the Chinese Association. We were delighted to receive them. On the 18th, fourteen others joined us, including Samundar Khan. So the numbers increased day by day. In this chapter, I propose to gather together some of our experiences in prison on different occasions and to explain how we passed our time there.

The question of food is a matter of great moment to many of us, even in ordinary circumstances; but to those in prison it often becomes most important of all. The rule of prison is that a prisoner has to remain content with jail food without procuring any from outside. A soldier also has to submit to his regulation rations; but there is this difference, that a soldier's friend can send food to him from outside and he can take it, while the prisoner is usually prohibited from doing this. Therefore, the prohibition about food is one of the signs of being in prison. Even in general conversation, you will find the jail-officers saying that there should be no question of taste about prison food, and no article should be allowed merely to give relish. In talk with the prison medical officer, I told him that it was necessary for us to have something to eat along with the dry bread that was given to us. He replied that we clearly wanted to eat with relish; but that no palatable thing could be allowed in prison.

According to the regulations, in the first week each Indian got twelve ounces of mealie meal porridge in the morning, without sugar or ghee; at noon, four ounces of rice and one ounce of ghee; in the evening for five days he would get twelve ounces of mealie meal porridge, and for two days twelve ounces of boiled beans and salt. This scale had been modelled on the dietary of the Bantus, the only difference being that they are given crushed maize corn in the evening together with lard or fat, while the Indians get rice. From the second week onward, for two days boiled potatoes and for two days cabbages are given along with maize flour. Those who take meat are given meat with vegetables on Sundays.

The first batch of prisoners resolved to beg for no favours at the hands of the Government. They would take whatever food was served out as long as it was not religiously objectionable. But as a matter of fact, the food I have mentioned was not the proper kind of diet for an Indian at all, though medically it contained sufficient nutrition. Maize is the daily food of the Bantus and therefore the maize diet suits them. Indeed, they thrive on it in jail. But Indians rarely use maize flour in their homes. Only rice suits them. Indians also are not used to eating beans alone, nor could we like vegetables cooked by or for the Bantus. They never clean the vegetables nor season them with any spices. Again, the vegetables cooked for them mostly consist of peelings left over after the vegetables have been prepared for the European convicts. For spices, nothing else except salt is given. Sugar is never dreamt of. Thus the food question was a very difficult one for us all. Still, as we had determined

that the passive resisters were neither to solicit nor ask for favours from the jail authorities, we tried to rest content with this unsuitable kind of food.

In reply to his enquiries, we had told the Governor of the prison that the food did not suit us, but we were determined not to ask for any favours from the Government. If Government of its own accord wanted to make a change, it would be welcome; otherwise we would go on taking the regulation diet.

But this determination could not last very long. When others joined us, we thought it would be improper to make them share all this trouble with us. Was it not sufficient that they had shared imprisonment with us? So we began to speak to the Governor on their behalf. We told him that we ourselves were prepared to take any kind of food, but the later batches could not do so. He thought over the matter, and said that he would allow them to cook separately, if they put their complaint down to the ground of religion. But the articles of food would be the same, for it did not rest with him to make any changes.

In the meantime, other Indians had joined us and some of them elected to starve rather than take mealie meal porridge. So I read the jail rules and found out that application in such matters should be made to the Director of Prisons. Therefore I asked the Governor for permission to apply to the Director, and sent a petition accordingly.

As it was an urgent matter I asked for a reply to be sent by wire.

Twenty-one of us had signed the petition and while it was being despatched seventy-six more came in. They

also had a dislike for the mealie meal porridge, and so we added a paragraph stating that the new arrivals also objected to the diet. I requested the Governor to send it at once.

He asked his superior's permission by telephone, and allowed at once four ounces of bread in place of the mealie meal porridge. We were all very pleased, and four ounces of bread were given to us both morning and evening. Indeed, in the evening, we got eight ounces, which made up half a loaf. But this was merely a temporary arrangement. A committee was sitting on the question and we heard that they had recommended an allowance of flour, ghee and pulse; but before it could take effect, we had been released, and so nothing more happened.

In the beginning, when there were only eight of us, we did not cook for ourselves; so we used to get badly-cooked rice and vegetables whenever the same were given. Afterwards, we obtained permission to cook for ourselves. On the first day, Mr. Kadva cooked. After that, Mr. Thambi Naidoo and Mr. Jiva both took turns, and during our last days they had to cook for about 150 men. They did their cooking once only, except on vegetable days, which were two in a week. Then they had to cook twice. Mr. Thambi Naidoo took great trouble over his cooking and I used to serve the food.

From the style of the petition it may be understood that it was presented on behalf of all Indian prisoners. We talked with the Governor also on the same lines, and he had promised to look into the jail diet of the Asiatic prisoners. We still hoped that the diet of the Indians would be improved.

Again, the three Chinese used to get a different diet, and hence annoyance was felt, as there was an appearance of their being considered separate from and inferior to us. For this reason, I applied on their behalf to the Governor and to Mr. Playford, and it was ordered that they should be placed on the same level as Indians.

It is instructive to compare this dietary with that of the Europeans. They get for their breakfast mealie meal porridge and eight ounces of bread; for the mid-day lunch, bread and soup, or bread and meat, or bread and meat with potatoes or vegetables; and in the evenings bread and mealie meal porridge. Thus they got bread thrice in a day, and so they did not care whether they had the mealie food or not. Again, they got meat and soup in addition. Besides this, they were often given tea or cocoa. This will show that both the Europeans and the Bantus get food suitable to them, and it is the Indians alone who suffer. They had no special dietary of their own. If they were treated like Europeans in food, then the Europeans would have felt ashamed. But no one had the concern to find out what was the food of the Indians. They had thus to be ranked with the Bantus and silently suffer hunger. For this state of things I find fault with our own people, the passive resisters. Some Indians got the requisite food by stealth, others put up with whatever they got, and were either ashamed to make public the story of their distress or had no thought for others. Hence the outside public remained in the dark.

If we were strictly to follow truth and agitate where we get injustice, there would be no room to undergo such inconveniences. If we were to leave self and apply ourselves to the good of others, grievances would get



remedied soon. But just as it is necessary to take steps for the redress of such complaints about prison food, so it is necessary to think of certain other things besides. It is but meet that prisoners should undergo certain inconveniences. If there were no suffering, what would be the meaning of being called a prisoner? Those who are the masters of their minds take pleasure even in suffering, and live happily in jails.

There is another evil habit of ours, and that is our tenacity in sticking to our manners and customs in every little particular. We must "do in Rome as the Romans do." When we are living in South Africa we ought to accustom ourselves to what is considered good food in that country. Mealie meal porridge is a good article of diet, as simple and cheap as our wheat. We cannot say that it is insipid. Sometimes it is superior even to wheat. It is my belief that out of respect for the country of our adoption, we should take food which is produced in that country, provided it is not unwholesome. Many Europeans like this mealie food and eat it every morning. It becomes palatable if milk and sugar, or even ghee, be taken with it.

For these reasons and for the fact that we might have to go to jail again in the future, it is advisable for every Indian to accustom himself to these preparations of maize. With this habit formed, when the time comes, even if we take it merely with a little salt, we should not find it hard. All those nations that have advanced have given up certain things where there was nothing substantial to lose. The Salvation Army people attract the people of the land to which they go by adopting their customs and dress, and we should adapt our own ways

to South Africa where there is nothing objectionable in doing so.

It would have been a miracle had no one of the 150 prisoners fallen ill. The first to be taken ill was Mr. Samundar Khan. He had been brought into jail ailing and was taken to hospital the next day. Mr. Kadva was a victim of rheumatism, and for some days he remained with us and was treated by the doctor in the prison cell itself, but eventually he had to go to the hospital also. Two others suffered from fainting fits and were taken there. The reason was that it was very hot and the convicts had to remain out in the sun the whole day. We nursed them as best we could. Later on Mr. Nawab Khan also succumbed, and on the day of our release he had to be led out by hand. He had improved a little after the doctor had ordered milk to be given to him. On the whole, however, it may safely be said that the passive resisters fared well.

Our cell had space enough to accommodate only fifty-one prisoners. Later on, when instead of fifty-one there were 150 persons, great difficulty was felt. The Governor had to pitch tents outside, and many had to go there. During our last days, about a hundred were taken outside to sleep and back again in the morning. The area space was too small for this number, and we could pass our time only with difficulty. Added to this there was our evil inborn habit of spitting everywhere, which renders the place dirty and there was danger of disease breaking out. Fortunately our companions were amenable to advice, and assisted us in keeping the compound clean. Scrupulous care was exercised by the inspection officer, and this saved the inmates from disease.

Everyone will admit that the Government was at fault in incarcerating such a large number in so narrow a space. If the room was insufficient, it was incumbent on the Government not to send so many there; and if the struggle had been prolonged it would have been impossible for the Government to commit any more to this prison.

The Government, after wearisome correspondence, had allowed us the use of a table, with pen and ink. We had the free run of the prison library also. I had taken from it the works of Carlyle and the Bible. From the Chinese interpreter, who used to come to the prison, I borrowed the Quran translated into English, the speeches of Huxley, Carlyle's *Life of Burns*, *Johnson*, and *Scott*, and Bacon's *Essays*. From my own books I had taken the Bhagavad-Gita, with Manilal Nathubhai's annotations, several Tamil works, an Urdu Book from the Maulvi Sahib, the writings of Tolstoy and Ruskin. Many of these I read for the first time or read over again. I used to study Tamil regularly. In the morning I would read the Gita and at noon mostly the Quran. In the evening I taught the Bible to Mr. Fortoen, who was a Chinese Christian. He wanted to learn English, and I taught it to him through the Bible.

If I had been permitted to work out my full period I might have been able to complete my translation of the books of Carlyle and a book of Ruskin. Since I was fully occupied in the study of these works, I should not have become tired even if my sentence had been longer. Indeed, I should have passed a happy life, believing as I do that whoever has a taste for reading good books is able to bear loneliness in any place with great ease.

In the West we now see that the State looks after the religion of all its prisoners, and hence we find a special church in the Johannesburg prison for the Whites, who alone are allowed access to it. When I asked for permission for Mr. Fortoen and myself to attend church, the Governor told me that it was only for White Christian prisoners. Every Sunday they went there on parade, and preachers of different denominations gave them lessons of morality and religion.

Several missionaries also came to convert the Bantus, having obtained special permission. There is no church for them; they sit out in the open. Jews also have got their ministers to look after them. It is only the Hindus and the Muhammadans who are left spiritually unprovided for. There are not many Indian prisoners, it is true; but the absence of any such provision for them is hardly creditable to them. The Hindu and Musalman leaders should take counsel together and arrange for the religious instruction of the members of their own community in jail, even if there be only one convict. The preachers, whether Hindus or Maulvis, should be pure-hearted and they should be careful not to offend the convicts by anything they might say to them.

Every prisoner in the jail on getting up in the morning is required to fold his own bedding, and place it in its proper place. He must finish his toilet by six o'clock and be ready to start out at the stroke of the hour. The work begins at seven o'clock. It is of various kinds. The ground to be dug up was very hard. It had to be worked over with spades and hence the work often proved too difficult. Again, it was a very hot time of the year. The place where the convicts were taken was about a mile and a half from

the jail. Each one of us started very well indeed. But as no one of us was used to this kind of work, it was not long before we were quite exhausted. Every hour the day advanced the work seemed harder still.

The warder was very strict. He used to cry out every now and then, "Go on, go on." This made the Indians quite nervous. I saw some of them weeping. One of them had a swollen foot. All this caused me a great deal of heart-burning; and yet on every occasion I reminded them of their duty and asked them to perform it as well as possible, with a good heart, and without minding the words of the warder. I also felt myself tired out. My hands were covered with blisters and water was oozing from them. I could hardly work with the spade and felt the weight of it as if it were made of lead. I prayed to God to preserve my honour, to maintain my limbs intact, and to bestow on me sufficient strength to be able to perform my allotted task to the end. I trusted in Him and went on with my work.

The warder would sometimes remonstrate with me when I required an occasional break to get over the fatigue. I told him that it was unnecessary for him to remind me of my duty. I was prepared to go through as much of it as I possibly could, and I was not able to do more.

Just then I saw Mr. Jhinabhai faint. While I was pouring water on his head, the thought came to me that most of the Indians had trusted my word and had submitted themselves to imprisonment on that account. If the advice that I happened to offer them were erroneous, then how great a sin would I be committing in the eyes of God in tendering it to them! They were undergoing

all sorts of hardships on account of my advice. With this thought in my mind I heaved a deep sigh. With God as my witness, I reflected on the subject once more, and was immediately reassured that what I had done was right.

I felt that the advice that I tendered to them was the only advice I could give; I had no choice in the matter. In anticipation of future happiness, it was absolutely necessary that we should undergo the hardest trials and sufferings beforehand. There was no reason to be grieved at this. Jhinabhai himself had merely had a fainting fit. But even if it had been death, how could I offer any other advice than what I had already done? It came to my mind that it was much more honourable for anybody to die suffering in that manner than to continue living a life of perpetual enslavement.

On one occasion a warder came to me, and asked me to provide him with two of our men to clean the water-closets. I thought I could do nothing better than clean them myself, and so I offered him my services. In my own case I have no particular dislike to that kind of work. On the contrary, I am of opinion that we ought to get ourselves accustomed to it.

Once I was given a bed in a ward where there were principally Bantu prisoners. Here I passed the whole night in great misery and terror. I did not know then that I was to be taken the next day to another cell which was occupied by Indian prisoners. Fretting that I would be kept incarcerated with such men as those I saw around me, I got very nervous and terror-stricken. And yet I tried my best to reconcile myself to the idea that it was my duty to undergo any suffering that might befall me.

I read from the Bhagavad-Gita that I had with me certain verses suited to the occasion, which I pondered over and I became soon reconciled to the situation.

The chief reason why I got nervous was that in the same room there were a number of wild, murderous-looking, vicious Bantu and Chinese prisoners who had been convicted of violent crime. I did not know their language. One of the Bantus began to ply me with questions. As far as I could gather he seemed to be mocking me indecently. I did not understand what his questions were and I kept quiet. At last he asked me in broken English, "Why have they brought you here?" I gave him a very short reply and again was silent. He was followed by one of the Chinese convicts. He was worse than the other. He approached my bed and looked at me intently as though he had some purpose towards me. I kept on with my silence. He then proceeded towards the bed of the Bantu, which was near. There they began to mock each other indecently. Both of these prisoners were there for crimes of violence. How could I enjoy sleep after seeing these dreadful things?

When at a later period of the Satyagraha struggle I got three months' hard labour, I once again was imprisoned along with my brother Indians and my son in the Volksrust Jail. My experience this time was unique, and what I learnt from it I could not have learnt after years of study. These three months were quite invaluable. I saw many vivid pictures of passive resistance, and I became a more confirmed resister even than before. For all this I had to thank the Government of the Transvaal.

Several officers had betted that I would not get less

than six months'. My friends, who were old offenders, and my own son had got six months', and so I too wished that the officers might win their bets. Still, I had my own misgivings, and they proved true. When the sentence was given I got only three months', that being the maximum under the law.

After going there, I was glad to meet Dawood Muhammad, Rustomji, Sorabji, Hajura Singh, Pillay, Lal Bahadur Singh and other "resisters." With the exception of about ten of us, all the others were accommodated in tents which were pitched in the jail compound for sleeping. The scene resembled a camp more than a prison. Everyone liked to sleep in the tents if they got a chance.

We were quite comfortable this time about our meals. We used to cook for ourselves as before, and we were able to cook as we liked. We were about seventy-seven passive resisters in all.

Those who were taken out for work had a hard time of it. The road near the Magistrate's Court had to be constructed, so they had to dig up stones and carry them. After the road was finished they were asked to dig up grass from the school-room compound. But they did their work cheerfully. For three days I was also taken out with these gangs for work, but in the meanwhile a telegram was received from Pretoria that I was not to be taken outside for work. I was much disheartened at this because I liked to move out; it improved my health and exercised my body. Generally I take two meals in a day, but in the Volksrust Jail, on account of this physical exercise in the open air, I felt hungry thrice. After I was taken from road-making, I was given the work of a



scavenger, but this was no good for hard exercise, and after a time even that work was taken away.

On March 2nd I heard that I was ordered to be sent to Pretoria. The warder asked me to be ready at once, and we had to go to the station in pelting rain, walking on hard roads with my luggage on my head. We left by the evening train in a third-class carriage.

My removal to Pretoria gave rise to various surmises. Some thought that peace was at hand; others thought that, after separating me from my companions, the Transvaal Government intended to oppress me more than otherwise in order to make me surrender. Others thought that in order to stifle discussions in the House of Commons it might be intended to give me greater liberty and convenience.

I did not like to leave Volksrust Prison, since we passed our days and nights pleasantly there, talking to one another. Hajura Singh and Joshi always put us questions that were neither useless nor trivial because they were related to science and philosophy. One did not care to leave such company and such a camp.

But if everything always happened as we wished, we should not be called human beings. So I left the place, quietly saluting Mr. Kaji on the road. The warder and I were put in a single compartment. It was very cold and it rained on the way the whole night. I had my overcoat and I was permitted to use it. Bread and cheese was provided for my meals on the way; but as I had eaten before I left, I gave this to the warder.

We reached Pretoria on March 3rd and found everything altered. The jail was freshly built and the men were new convicts. I was asked to eat, but I had no

